NEW STATESMAN
SOCIETY

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The US Masters

Meet the new boss, same as the old boss. Who's who in the new world order?

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**The Gulf: Edward Said, Mahfouz, Alex Cockburn
Denis Norden at the flicks; oilrig safety at sea**

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PHARMACEUTICALS: A PATENT CASE FOR ACTION

Britain's pharmaceutical industry is among the most successful of the country's industries – providing NHS patients with an increasing number of new or improved medicines and earning the UK more than £2 billion in exports last year.

Its continued success, based on a sustained record of discovery and development of new medicines, is being hampered by serious erosion of effective patent protection for such products.

The British pharmaceutical industry is therefore urging the UK Government to support European Commission proposals to restore an effective patent term for new medicines to encourage further research – as has already happened in the United States and Japan.

The Commission is proposing a certificate to 'add on' to the existing patent a designated period to compensate (at least in part) for the time taken to develop a new medicine.

Why should the British Government *support* the EC proposals?

1 **Because** pharmaceutical manufacturers in the UK, and in the rest of Europe, should not be placed at a disadvantage to their major competitors in Japan and the USA.

2 **Because** with their innovative record, British pharmaceutical companies will be in a strong position to improve their competitiveness throughout the world including the rest of Europe. (The top three and 11 of the top 50 best selling medicines world-wide in 1988 were discovered by British-based companies).

3 **Because** the UK pharmaceutical industry provides a positive trade 'surplus' of almost £1,000 million a year at a time when Britain's trade with the rest of the world is in substantial deficit.

4 **Because** further encouragement for pharmaceutical research and development will help the industry to find new products for the treatment of NHS patients and for patients on a global basis.

MPs can help by urging the UK Government to support the EC proposals. Such support will be a vote not only for a successful British industry but also for UK Limited.

THE BRITISH PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY.
HELPING TO KEEP BRITAIN HEALTHY

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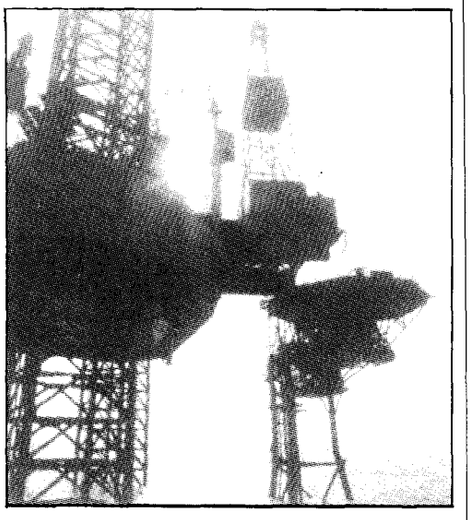

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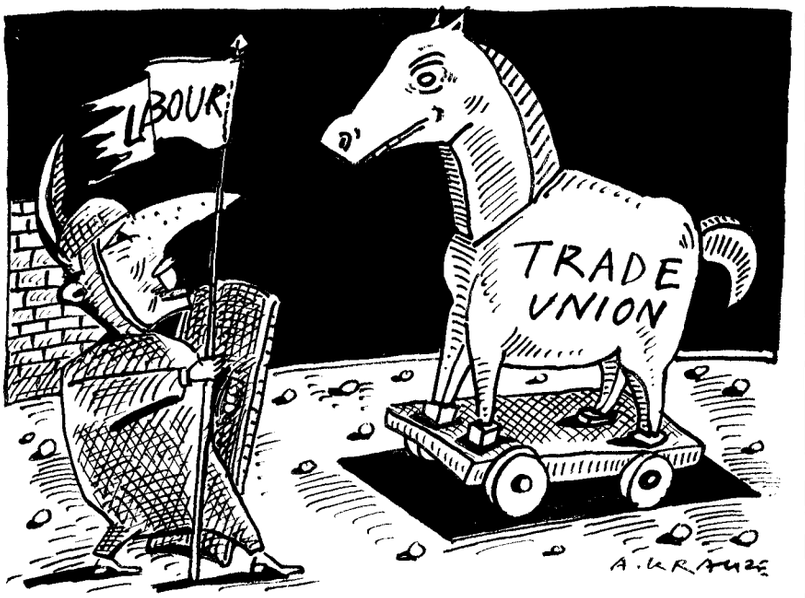
The right stuff

Everyone agrees that Labour must distance itself from the unions. But they would gain from being more independent too



It's curious that almost everyone, including major trade union figures, regards the relationship between the trade unions and the Labour Party purely in terms of the party's interests. It is widely agreed that the party must distance itself from the trade unions. But wouldn't the trade unions themselves gain from loosening the umbilical cord which connects them with their demanding, grown-up offspring?

The trade unions must, of course, take their public image seriously. In the 1970s they were blamed for Britain's economic troubles and their power was widely exaggerated and feared. For more than ten years they have had to withstand hostile legislation, political invective and arrogant indifference from a uniquely anti-trade union government. That government has wanted not simply to reform the trade unions, but to stop them from interfering with the processes of the market. Over that period, they have lost nearly four million members and now rely heavily on a public sector core. But over that period they have also restored public confidence in their activities. Most people (80 per cent, according to Mori) believe that they are essential to protect workers' interests (ie, to interfere in the processes of the market).

The "new realism" has undoubtedly contributed to their respectability. Trade union leaders have carefully adopted a new, less aggressive discourse. Members have done their best to carry the public with them during disputes. And the government's restrictive laws have almost put an end to the public disorder which damaged them in the seventies. But naturally enough the trade unions want to establish a more balanced framework of laws to work within. Most of them accept the "democratic" element in the Conservative legislation, but want more freedom of manoeuvre under laws which command public assent.

At Blackpool this week the TUC has firmly established the principles of this legal framework. It has chosen to go for "positive" individual rights rather than the "negative" old trade union immunities which didn't, as the Tories argued, place the unions "above the law", but which were so complex in operation that they couldn't be readily understood by the general public. The European dimension finally resolved the issue. Immunities in Britain were a way of getting round judge-made common law which is unknown on the Continent. So the European social democrats who took the lead in framing the Social Charter naturally chose the rights-based approach which Labour's reformers were advocating at home. (But we hope that Labour's reformers won't stop at the workplace: they ought to be framing a general bill of rights, containing civil, political, social and employment rights. The more universal its approach, the more public sympathy it will win.)

Possibly the key proposal in Labour's offer to the trade unions is that on recognition. The party's policy document, *Looking to the Future*, promises a legal right to recognition where "substantial" support for trade union representation exists within a workplace. Professor David Metcalf at the LSE has recently found that trade union membership has *fallen in line with the decline in employers who recognise* unions. A statutory right to recognition, therefore, could contribute to a rise in membership.

There is, however, the danger that the switch from collective immunities to individual rights represents a switch from collective action to individual redress. It is easy to exaggerate this: individual rights—benefit entitlements, housing or tenant law, employment protection—almost always provide a purchase for collective enforcement which might not otherwise exist, and frequently can be enforced only through such action. At the same time, there is a real tendency to undervalue collective action and self-activity among trade union leaders. Trade union members ought not to be reduced to mere consumers of cheap insurance; cooperation (see Charles Woolfson's fierce article, page 15) can't always replace collective action.

Finally, the trade unions need to demonstrate their independence from Neil Kinnock just as much as he has to assert his autonomy. As the week at Blackpool has shown, too much is decided by way of informal agreements, nods and winks, ill-defined "understandings". The trade unions can again learn here from Europe, where trade unions have a more sharply defined relationship with sympathetic parties. They must develop their own distinct identity, decide their own criteria, carry out their own research, frame their own proposals and negotiate on them in public. Not only will they gain from developing a clear political persona; so will their members and, paradoxically, the Labour Party too.

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Russian sprinters

As east European states move to embrace the market, the west's macho economists gloat over the outcome. "You can't become a little bit pregnant," they snigger, implying that healthy, bouncing free enterprise is already well on its way. Even in the Soviet Union, arguments now turn on the length of the gestation period, not its end result. This week Boris Yeltsin signalled his wish to commit the Russian Federation to a 500-day dash for private ownership and open competition, the so-called "Shatalin plan". Union premier Ryzhkov would prefer a longer transition, with the planning board Gosplan acting as midwife to the market.

Poland's current dose of monetarism teaches us what to expect from a Russian race to reform: official unemployment, for the first time; old industries flattened almost overnight; the risk of a backlash that would topple the reformers. So far, so grim. But western foes of "enterprise culture" should not assume that a slow drift away from state control would save the Soviet people much distress. Their economy now suffers from the worst of both worlds. Devolution of decision making has unravelled the distribution network, with continuing shortages of staples such as tea and tobacco. But the dead hand of the command system still hinders initiative. So it's now easier for entrepreneurs to profit from bottlenecks than to produce what people want.

Yeltsin's clean break holds out more hope than a stalemate that merely lets profiteers thrive. It needs two further supports to stand a chance of success. First, a flourishing democratic practice to keep the reforming élite in check. Second, a generous infusion of western aid—not just clever investment—to recompense the Soviet Union for the huge strategic bonus that the Gorbachev years have handed to the US and its allies. Markets also need a flow of information, which Soviet producers and consumers still largely lack. One British adman thinks he knows the answer here: convert the KGB into a market research bureau.

When? Why? ERM...

Trying to determine the right moment to enter the Exchange Rate Mechanism is like trying to pin the tail on the donkey. With every swing of the pound, the dollar and the D-mark, a blindfold government attempts to judge when to nail Britain's currency to the rest of Europe.

The pound has fallen by 7 cents against the dollar and half a pfennig against the D-Mark this week. This has sparked off rumours that Britain could join the ERM in a matter of days or weeks. A relatively low pound would ensure that we entered at a favourable rate; a strong pound could fuel inflation and encourage a flood of cheap imports, ruining Britain's manufacturing base. Now is the time, some City voices are urging, before further events in the Gulf give another boost to our petro-currency.

But the decision to enter the ERM is as much political as economic. Chancellor John Major has stuck to Nigel Lawson's view that, sooner rather than later, it has to happen. He could be forgiven, however, for delaying a decision. The ERM has come to symbolise the extent of Britain's commitment to Europe. For Mrs Thatcher, it represents a dreaded first step on the road to fully fledged European monetary union. As a result, John Major has to do more than locate the ideal economic moment.

Labour has remained silent on the issue for its own political reasons. The party has enthusiastically embraced entry to the ERM as proof that it is a good European outfit, but is uncertain about its precise economic benefits. MPs as disparate as Austin Mitchell and Ken Livingstone have broken ranks to argue that it could have a devastating impact on Labour's ability to regenerate manufacturing industry. Yet one fine morning, we're likely to find we're in, without ever having had a proper debate.

Jobs for boys in blue

Male Tories have such bad luck with women. David Waddington is the latest to become embroiled: the Home Secretary is in trouble with the police, not in a sex, but a sexism, scandal. Alison Halford is the most senior policewoman in Britain. After seven years as Assistant Chief Constable on Merseyside, she has instituted proceedings against her own and two other police authorities. She claims she has repeatedly been denied promotion because she is a woman. Waddington is cited because of his involvement in approving applicant shortlists at this level of seniority.

The Home Office constantly bombards police authorities with circulars urging them to discharge their responsibilities as equal opportunities employers. However, only 14 per cent of the force in England and Wales are women. And 92.5 per cent of these women hold the lowest rank of constable, compared to 72 per cent of men. John Alderson, former chief constable of Devon and Cornwall, cites "police culture" as the fundamental problem. The macho culture at the bottom of the hierarchy rises to the top as officers move up.

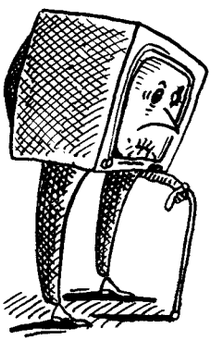
The buck stops at the Home Office. But powers conferred on the Home Secretary under the 1964 Police Act can clash with those of local police authorities, especially in selection and appointment procedures. The Home Office recently withheld its approval from Derbyshire Police Authority's choice of chief constable. The authority went ahead and made the appointment anyway. The result: the original appointment was rescinded and the Home Office's man installed. Sexism is not the only issue here.

Yen for an honour

If the surviving, or relatively surviving, honorary knights of the Order of the British Empire met for dinner, the result would be a singular evening: Ronald Reagan, Bob Geldof, Caspar Weinberger and, latest recruit to the order, Takashi Ishihara, chairman of the Nissan car company.

Arise, Sir Takashi? The leading article in the *Sun* was certainly not amused, but it wasn't entirely clear why. It did not object to Nissan setting up a British car plant, and went out of its way to announce that "foreigners are welcome in this country", which is rather like reading Ian Paisley's paean to the Pope. The problem for the *Sun* was that Order of the British Empire: "Back in the 1940s his fellow citizens had different aims. Had they succeeded, it would have been their empire, not ours." Ishihara may be Mrs Thatcher's greatest admirer in the east, but if he gets too close he will get snapped at by her unhousetrained poodle.

In fact it would be a welcome development if the devalued British honours were reserved entirely for the foreigners who might still appreciate them. The honours were invented either to raise money or to reward supporters for favours received. Ishihara's knighthood fits the bill perfectly. Lesser awards, which now go to pop stars or lowly paid members of the caring professions, are a non-natural resource just waiting to be privatised as a tourist attraction for the Anglophile Japanese. "Come to Britain for a round of golf, a Burberry and a British Empire Medal!"



Just as Labour's Mark Fisher makes a small summer splash by promising free TV licences for pensioners, here's a sign that the couch potato's days are numbered. A report from the Henley Centre for Forecasting shows average viewing hours on the slide—down by 5 per cent over the last five years. At this rate, an extreme pessimist might think, the next Labour government will be handing out licences to bemused OAPs for that nice old glass-fronted plant stand in the corner...

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POLITICAL COLUMN

Timid at heart

Labour's "say nothing, lose nothing" policy may retain its popularity — but for how long?

Sarah Baxter

Two recent opinion polls have at last shed some light on the potential impact of the "Gulf factor" on domestic politics. One, an ICM poll of 1,438 voters in the *Sunday Correspondent* on 2 September, offered the familiar, comforting picture for Labour. The party still enjoyed a 14 per cent lead over the Conservatives and was supported by 51 per cent of the electorate. This was remarkably similar to its position in the polls at the close of parliament just over a month ago: Saddam Hussein's Middle Eastern adventure had not cost the party a single percentage point.

From this, Labour leaders may well have concluded that they were right to adopt a bipartisan approach to the Gulf crisis. They may also have noted that four out of five ICM respondents claimed that the government's handling of the issue had not affected their voting intentions. Indeed, there was no reason why it should have made a difference, since Neil Kinnock had let it be known early on that he would have behaved exactly as Margaret Thatcher had, with perhaps a touch more emphasis on the United Nations' role.

But in a *Sunday Express* poll by Telephone Surveys Ltd, published the same day, 65 per cent of voters said they preferred Thatcher to lead the country in a crisis than Kinnock, who scored only 20 per cent. Taken together, the two polls suggest that voters may be sticking with Labour as long as the west remains locked in a phoney war with Iraq, but that the party's support could evaporate if and when the shooting starts.

The *Sunday Express*'s poll was obviously constructed around events in the Gulf. But Neil Kinnock's perceived weakness as a crisis leader may affect voters' attitudes towards him outside the military arena. What if, for instance, the same question were posed about an economic crisis? In recent months, the fragile state of the economy has dented the Conservatives' popularity, but it is by no means certain that Labour has convinced the electorate that it would be best placed to cope with a sharp economic downturn or any other sudden, unforeseen, domestic event.

In part, this must be because the party has been out of power for more than a decade and voters can only draw on distant memories of the Callaghan government. "Crisis, what crisis?", he said during the winter of discontent. But it may also be connected to Labour's performance in opposition. Three general election defeats in a row have so affected the party's confidence that it frequently acts as if it has one hand tied behind its back.

Neil Kinnock's initial reluctance to demand parliament's recall after the invasion of Kuwait is a case in point. As last week's *Correspondent* poll showed, it ensured that no votes were lost, but nor were any gained. More damagingly, as the *Sunday Express* poll showed, it left the public with the impression that, in a crisis, it is best to leave the Iron Lady in charge. Kinnock only felt ready to press for a Commons debate once it was clear that he was sufficiently distanced from his "awkward squad" (Tony Benn et al); that Labour's bipartisan policy was firmly in place; and that the government had been granted enough time to take action on behalf of the nation against Saddam Hussein.

Kinnock only felt ready to press for a Commons debate once it was clear he was distanced from his "awkward squad"

By conniving with the notion, put forward by the *Daily Telegraph*, that "the fevered atmosphere" of the Commons renders it unfit to discuss momentous issues of foreign policy—at least until they have been well and truly settled—Kinnock in effect signalled that parliament really doesn't count for all that much as a forum for putting Labour's view across. By the same token, he failed to capitalise on the feeling that parliament, more than ever, needs to assert its authority in the face of unbridled executive power. He also inadvertently reinforced the impression that Her Majesty's "Loyal" Opposition can only play second fiddle when major issues are at stake.

Yet parliamentary observers have frequently noted that Labour's front-bench team contains by far the keenest minds and sharpest debaters in the House of Commons. The shadow chancellor, John Smith, scalped Leon Brittan in the Westland debate and hastened Nigel Lawson's departure from office. And while Smith was recovering from a heart attack, his deputy, Gordon Brown, earned his promotion to shadow trade and industry secretary by continuing to trounce the Tories on the floor of the House.

Robin Cook saw off Mrs Thatcher's former favourite, John Moore, as health secretary, and has successfully harried Kenneth Clarke over the NHS bill, the "opting out" of hospitals, and "care in the community". Clarke, who used to be tipped as a future Conservative leader, now looks like another "yesterday's man".

Shadow transport secretary, John Prescott, once much derided by Kinnock's office, has also managed to strip Cecil Parkinson of what remained of his dignity. Helped by a series of transport disasters (the Clapham rail crash, Lockerbie, the *Marchioness*) and by the government's refusal to invest in public transport, he has ensured that Parkinson has become enmeshed in just as many fiascos as when he was energy secretary.

Cook and Prescott at least have a strong alternative philosophy to the Conservatives, even though both are ultimately constrained by Labour's insistence that it won't "commit" public resources in advance of a general election. But Labour's overall defensiveness means that its front-bench strikers are essentially counter-attackers. So, on some of the key issues of the day—the poll tax, for example, or passports for the Hong Kong Chinese —Labour's criticism of the government has been blunted by its reluctance to say anything more about its own proposals than "wait and see". Although this may have prevented opponents from picking over the details of the party's programme, it has left its front bench vulnerable to the taunt: "What would you do?"

Labour's present lead in the opinion polls may well owe much to the perception that it would stick to the broad guidelines established by Mrs Thatcher's 11 years in power, while tinkering at the edges to make the system more palatable. But as the Gulf crisis has shown, this tactic has failed to invest Neil Kinnock with the stamp of a leader.

With perhaps 18 months to go before the next general election, the party remains at the mercy of sudden twists of fate, over which it has no control.

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TAKING LIBERTIES

Jolyon Jenkins

If Paul Foot and *World In Action*'s crusading journalists do not take up the cause of Justice For The Guinness Four, it will not just be because Ernest Saunders and his fellow felons are guilty as hell. It will be because the civil liberties of alleged white-collar criminals do not rank high on anybody's list of priorities.

The government knows that no one loves an alleged fraudster. Public concern about city sleaze has allowed it to grant an astonishing battery of powers to the various agencies that investigate white-collar crime. The normal safeguards of the criminal justice system cease to apply. Consider the case of a businessman, Mr X, whose activities have come to the attention of the authorities.

On Monday, the Serious Fraud Office call. They question Mr X closely, and warn him that he is obliged to answer: the 1987 Criminal Justice Act abolished his centuries-old right of silence. If he does not answer their questions he is committing a criminal offence, and is liable to up to six months' imprisonment. They point out that only recently an accountant was sentenced to five months in gaol for reticence.

On Tuesday, inspectors from the Department of Trade and Industry come round. They too question Mr X, this time under oath. They also tell him that he is obliged to answer them too. If he does not, they can take him to the High Court and ask a judge to commit him to prison for contempt. This is no idle threat: the *Independent* journalist, Jeremy Warner, came within an ace of being imprisoned for refusing to reveal his sources to DTI inspectors who were investigating insider dealing.

On Wednesday, it's the turn of the Inland Revenue and Lloyd's. They go over much the same ground as in the previous two interviews. Their powers are more limited—except that their questions reveal that they have already conferred with the men from the SFO and DTI. They can't compel answers, but they will quickly spot any differences between today's story and Monday's and Tuesday's.

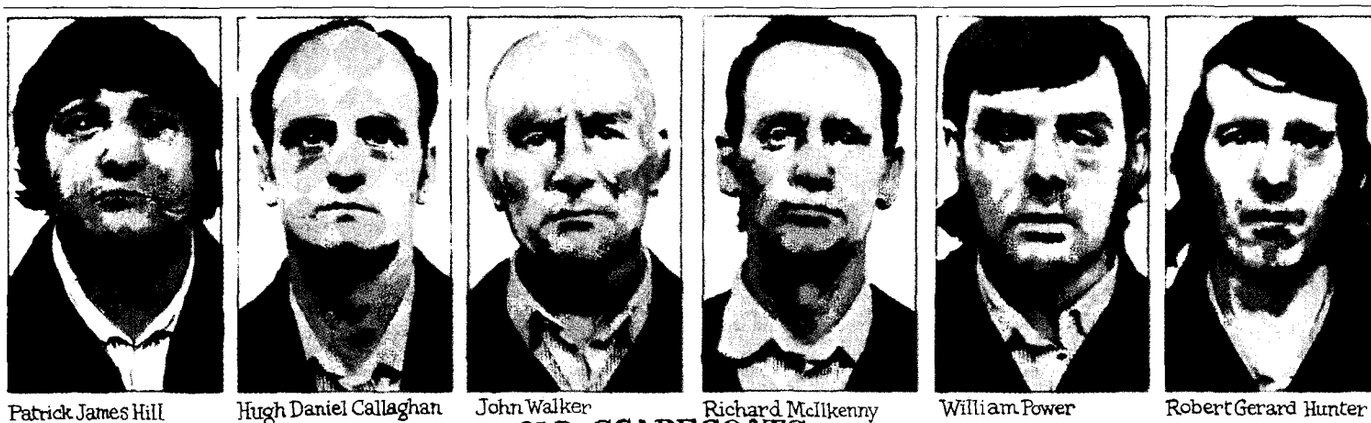
On Thursday, the Securities and Investment Board puts in an appearance. They want Mr X to produce certain documents, and to answer their questions—which, by now, are becoming familiar. Mr X demurs, but the SIB men point out that under the Financial Services Act, they have licensed him as an "authorised person". If he doesn't do what they ask, they will withdraw this authorisation, and he will lose his livelihood.

On Friday, Customs and Excise come along. They seem well-informed. But, they say, they will agree not to prosecute, as long as Mr X pays them money. Technically, this is known as "compounding". Non-technically, it is known as extortion.

On Saturday and Sunday, Mr X tries to catch up with his business. And on Monday, the Serious Fraud Office come round again.

These investigations can last for years. Mr X will want to instruct lawyers, but until he's charged with an offence, he will not be entitled to representation on legal aid. In theory he may be able to get a little free advice, but the chances of finding legal-aid lawyers competent in the field will be negligible. Even when he is charged with an offence he may, like Ernest Saunders, find it a hard struggle to get legal aid.

And in the end, the investigating organisations may decide to take no action. Innocent Mr X, poorer and greyer, can return to the important business of wealth creation.



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DIARY

Sean French

One of the great pleasures of writing in the press is the opportunity it gives to be despised by people I would normally never encounter. In the last few weeks I have been writing the Diary in the *Observer*, a task complicated only by the fact that I lead a social life more appropriate for a character in a late Beckett play than for a purveyor of what's happening about town.

I wrote an item about Prince Charles's arm operation, in the course of which I made a slightly cheap aside about the game of polo.

This seems to have caused some rage out in the shires and it incited one Lady Bellew, or rather, one The Lady Bellew (someone wrote recently that the reason that Kenneth Rose of the *Sunday Telegraph* was the best of diarists was that he knew all the right types of address for aristocrats), to put pen to paper.

"Pardon my language," she wrote to the editor, "but Sean French made a dam [*sic*] fool of himself with what he wrote about polo..." She diagnosed that I was suffering from an "inferiority complex". I was impressed by her instinctive social assumption (I'm reminded of the occasion when someone asked me with disdain whether French was spelt with two small 'f's). Perhaps she had failed to find me in Debrett's and the Almanac of Saxe-Gotha. More likely my instinctive oikness permeates every sentence I write.

My principal error, it emerged, was to assume that polo was a socially stratified sport. Not any more, her ladyship insisted. "Many of today's riders began as grooms."

Yet another sign of changing mores is that I was punished only by letter. A hundred years ago I would probably have been thrashed by her ladyship's retainers, then tied to the back of her horse and dragged through hedges and fields on a day's hunting. And been grateful for it.

The story is told—in fact judging by recent experience I imagine I have told it in these columns more than once—that Peter Sellers was once asked what he would do if he had the chance to live his life over again. He would do everything precisely the same, he claimed, but wouldn't see the film *The Magus*.

Sometimes when I'm sitting in a viewing theatre trying to peer at my watch (were luminous watches really so dangerous that they had to be entirely abolished?) by the light of the screen, I wish that I had a cinematic form of food taster who could warn me off certain films which do nothing except remove a couple of hours from the few precious years of productive life that remain to me.

In the course of my work I see many films long before they open and occasionally I will make use of this column to warn readers away from certain films for their own protection. I will say nothing of Michael Winner's supposed comedy, *Bullseye* (which opens later in the year), except that the title would be more appropriate if its last three letters were changed, that your life will be substantially improved by not seeing it and that, curiously enough, like *The Magus*, it stars Michael Caine.

The film is memorable for one moment only, and one that is so brief and elliptical that it will be spotted only by those who are paying attention, which in this film is particularly difficult. Since I know that readers will now find better things to do, I will describe it to you.

There is a tradition of film-makers inserting tiny acts of revenge against their enemies into films. For example, Richard Ingrams (then television critic of the *Spectator*) wrote unfavourably of the first series of *Fawlty Towers* and the second series then briefly featured a character called Mr Ingrams who is glimpsed inflating a rubber woman.

Michael Winner has no liking for David Puttnam, who publicly criticised the producers Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus, with whom Winner has recently worked (*Bullseye* is produced by the former): "I have never seen such an unwarranted and disgraceful attack by the head of one company against the heads of another company," wrote Winner in a letter to *Screen International*.

But Winner knows how to play hard ball. In one of *Bullseye*'s great comic moments, Roger Moore attends what he believes to be a health club but turns out to be a brothel. As he turns away from the receptionist he is followed by a man with a familiar grizzled beard. The woman greets him: "Hello, David."

In my capacity as chronicler and social historian, I should explain that this is a reference—executed with all the wit and lightness of touch that Winner brought to *Death Wish* and its ignoble sequels—to the occasion a couple of years ago when Puttnam, a relation of a member of the Royal Family and others were accused of attending a brothel masquerading as a health club.

So, it's nice to see British producers settling their differences with dignity. And if anyone claims that Winner's films lack hidden themes, you now know better.

A small child catching sight of a famous politician (the man's identity varies in different versions but it is most usually Randolph Churchill) once famously asked: "Mummy, what is that man for?" This question has been rather on my mind ever since I read in a newspaper that business consultants had been hired to assess the *New Statesman & Society*. I imagine that "What is Sean French for?" is at this moment being typed on to an electronic personal organiser somewhere, a question that I find rather difficult to answer myself.

But I digress from my main point which is to report another saying by a small child. I have the sort of face that is either not recognised or else thought to resemble someone not very flattering, that is unless Woody Allen, John McEnroe and the novelist Richard Ford are considered pin-ups.

But this Sunday I was reading the *Observer* book pages when the three-year-old child sitting opposite me at breakfast suddenly cried: "That's you!" And it was a photograph of William Boyd, the famous pretty-as-a-picture novelist. Admittedly the child's mother commented unfeelingly that the resemblance was only because we were both going bald. And admittedly I have since had a haircut so drastic that when wearing glasses I am more likely to be mistaken for Bertolt Brecht.

But I now suffer from an irresistible compulsion to tell people I meet that I have been mistaken for William Boyd. So I don't resist it.

ROGER WODDIS

The Ballad of Ford O.P.

(Acknowledgments to Oscar Wilde)

They scarce had time to settle in,
  Enjoying bed and board,
Before each prisoner was told,
  "We're moving you to Ford,
Where all the staff will welcome you
  And treat you like a lord."

There never were three men condemned
  To such a tragic plight;
For who would favour being free
  (Instead of locked up tight),
With modern loos, a snooker hall
  And movies every night?

They know not whether laws exist
  To help the common throng;
All that they know is that the weak
  Are born to serve the strong,
And that by being bent on fraud
  They had done nothing wrong.

For all must toil to earn a crust,
  On which their children feed,
Some do it for the love of wealth,
  And some for human need;
But only crooks can separate
  Pure genius from pure greed.

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Do you know anyone who has a terminal illness?

From 1st October 1990, a person with a terminal illness (someone who suffers from a progressive disease which is likely to cause death within six months) will be able to claim £37.55 Attendance Allowance per week **immediately.** The normal six months qualifying period will not apply to them.

In order to claim under this new provision, a medical report (DS1500) will be required from the patient's doctor. This will be completed free of charge for the patient. It should then be sent to the Department of Social Security with the Attendance Allowance claim form (DS2).

The usual Attendance Allowance medical examination and report will not be necessary in most cases. This means that decisions on claims can be made more quickly.

Special provision has been made for a representative (a carer for example) to claim on behalf of the terminally ill person. No mention of terminal illness is made in the DS1500 report or the DS2 claim form. Patients do not have to be told the nature of their condition.

These new provisions are intended to help terminally ill people. So, if you know anyone who you feel should claim, make sure their doctor fills in the DS1500 report. You can also help by ensuring these forms are completed and sent off without delay.

The new Attendance Allowance claim pack (DS2) will be available from September from any Social Security office, or by calling 0800 666 555 free of charge.

SOCIAL SECURITY

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Body heat

Supine and sweating, Maria Manning listens to the women come and go in a Turkish bath

Ironmonger Row in London's EC1: a giant crane swings high above Old Street, marking the construction of yet another mirror-windowed office block. Within its orbit a pocket of the city still functioning on a human scale survives the corporate onslaught. Past a ruined church and a small, dusty public garden is the solid red-brick building of the Public Baths and Washhouse. The austere 1930s facade has sprouted a row of red plastic awnings proclaiming its newer, fancier name, Finsbury Leisure Centre.

The Turkish bath suite is in the basement. Its subterranean location adds to the atmosphere of a separate, closed world. One side of a softly lit, carpeted room is split up by oak panels into cubicles, each containing a divan bed. Two black, middle-aged women recline like porpoises on the centre beds, sharing a bag of grapes propped on a coffee table between them. One delicately spits out the seeds into a paper cup. Big and bare they chat about clothes: "Why you never wear a skirt Deena?" "I do," Deena squeals in protest. "At the wedding I did." Opposite is a row of reclining chairs on which women lie, absorbed in reading or talking. This is a place devoted to relaxation and preening. The heat and the strong smell of sweat overlaid with perfumed oils, creams and lotions produce a thick, torpid atmosphere which bears down on you. All the furniture is designed for supine forms. It is impossible to be upright here.

The spectacle of naked women of all ages, shapes and sizes is momentarily shocking. But they are at ease with each other: unselfconscious, stately. Along with their clothes, some of the distance women fastidiously keep between each other is stripped away. The simple fact of their shared physical features—breasts, hips, haunches— seems to reinforce a companiable solidarity. Our own sex is, for the most part, mysterious to us. What do other women look like? Here curiosity is satisfied. To see female flesh in all configurations is also reassuring: there is life after cellulite.

Dead skin comes away in grey, silty clumps. She sluices me down with a shower jet, and scours me with a loofah

Not all are equally comfortable with this physical intimacy. One woman arrives purposefully carrying a picnic basket and spends most of her time eating. She is furtive when it comes to getting dressed. Wedging her bulky body behind the shield of a locker door, she awkwardly tries to step into her knickers while holding a towel like a tent around her. Some women, bereft of clothes, become emotionally attached to their towels. Towels are also used for marking out territory. An angular, grabby woman, overdressed in purple nail varnish, pounces to stake out her space on a bench before going for a shower. Later she carefully smoothes out a crease to extend her borders by an inch or so.

As the place fills up, lying down spaces are jealously coveted by those sitting up: "She's going," a woman tips off her friend with a nudge. But a Chinese woman, better placed, slides into the vacated place. The same etiquette which governs the taking of seats in trains or buses applies. Candidates for a space will make eye contact, and in that split second it is established which of them will stand off.

In the first hot room, a thin woman with the frailest smudge of ginger pubic hair holds court. I put my arms over my face and thereby hope to become invisible—a trick which last worked when I was three years old—and eavesdrop shamelessly. To an avid audience of three, she performs a thorough demolition job on their boss's character, capabilities and sexual prowess. This is a man who has no redeeming features. With exquisite precision she catalogues every despicable trait, every contemptible foible. She holds up his so-called professional competence as an object of scorn: "inside that Head of Department there's a filing clerk struggling to get out."

Also (and she has this on good authority), you would need tweezers to find his penis: "Freud got it wrong about women. Malcolm is the worst case of penis envy I ever came across." Her style is laconic—the heat prevents any real degree of animation—and vicious. She wields words like a scalpel blade. She alone is worth the entrance fee. As she drifts out with her entourage I decide to graduate to hot room number two.

Here we lie in the damp heat like stranded fish on marble slabs. A young woman in a facepack conducts a solemn, stiff-lipped conversation about accountancy exams. She asks her friend how her trip to Amsterdam with Him had gone. The friend, an Asian woman who wears—for decorum's sake I presume—a small pair of black knickers, replies: "We sat about in bars a lot, and ran out of things to say. But that always happens." They'd had a "ghastly" Indonesian meal— every dish they ordered was exactly the same as the last but with more chilli powder added, and a pushy waiter had forced them to drink Sancerre even though she preferred Chablis. With theatrical ennui they discuss the comparative merits of the various London airports, and the tedium of queuing. The facepack is elegantly blasé about imminent trips to Paris and Birmingham. They speak of flights and shuttle services as others speak of buses.

I adjourn to the smoking lounge, order tea and toast, and settle down to appreciate the decor. One wall is adorned with rural idylls; cottage nestling between trees; stream burbling past trees and, variation, tranquil river flowing past trees. Another wall carries a painting of a tiger stepping daintily into a languid pool, flanked by two seascapes, a yacht

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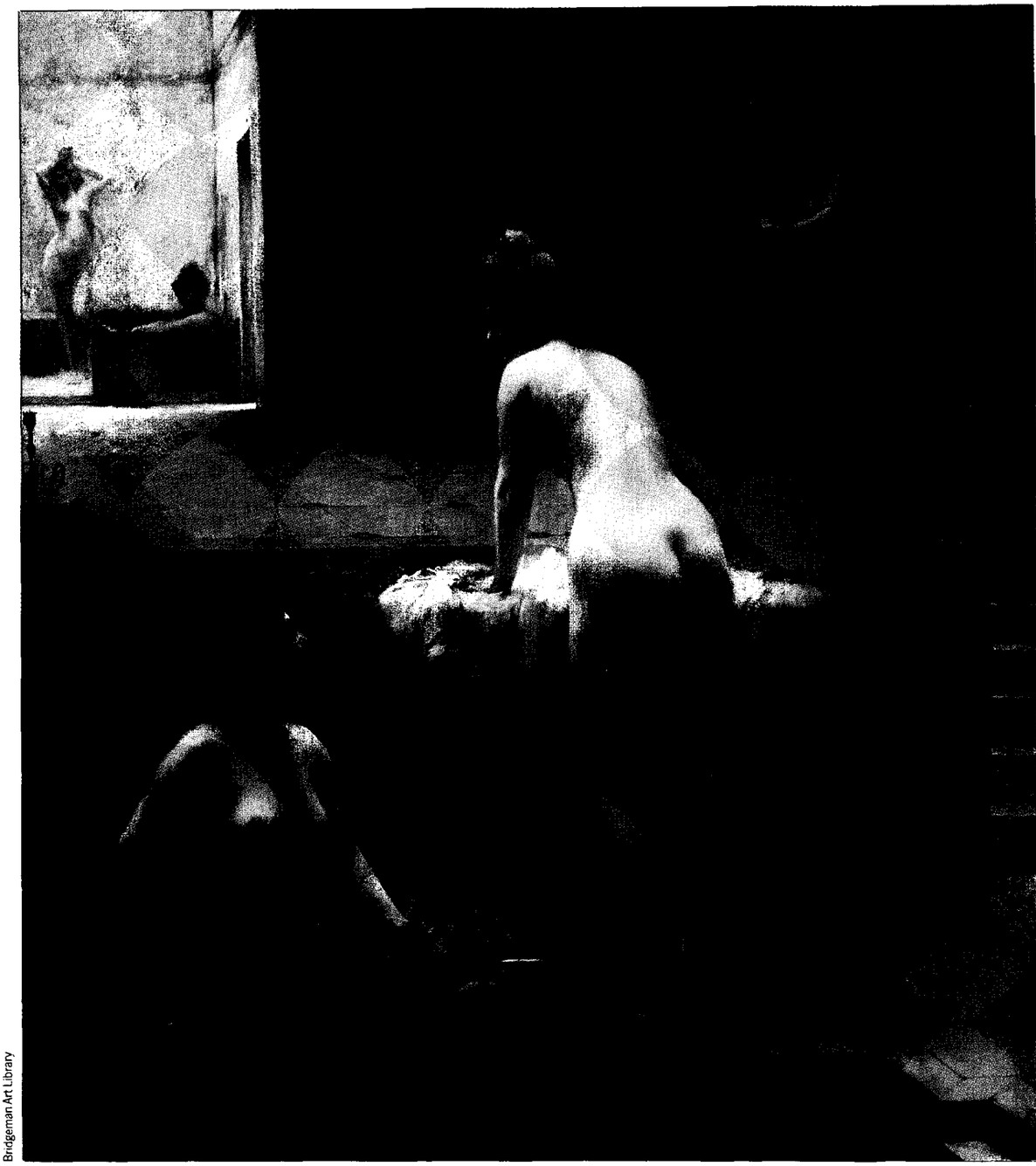

Bridgeman Art Library

To see female flesh in all configurations is also reassuring: there is life after cellulite

and sailing ship in choppy waters.

In between bouts of lolling about, women pad from room to room, shrugging off the heat by taking cold showers. I hear fractions of many conversations, some on that inexhaustible all-men-are-bastards theme (to which no woman ever fails to bring a fresh twist). A very tall, gentle woman, aged around 50, poignantly described the painful and exultant condition of being newly in love. An Australian student who knows her Bel Pourris says the South Indian restaurant at the Angel is good, and recommends aubergines cooked and served in little iron pots.

I am summoned for my body rub. This is the ultimate indulgence at the Turkish baths. Two masseuses work alongside each other, both wearing bathing costumes and flip-flops—their uniforms, I suppose. One is tall and muscular with a lot of wild hair tied up on top of her head. Mine is small, chunky, friendly and very brisk. She slaps the marble block: "Hop on little'un. On your back. Put your head on the wooden block." I watch her wring out a grimy cloth, like a window cleaner. "This'll take all the muck off."

With gusto she scrubs my inert form with the rough cloth, using rhythmic, circular movements. Dead skin comes away in grey, silty clumps. She sluices me down with a powerful shower jet, and scours me again with a loofah. I am then flipped over, doused with oil, and given an expert, slick massage. "You're done," she says.

Another shower restores a sense of reality. At this point I reckon I've banished enough impurities, and may in fact be suffering from toxin-deficiency. Renée, the attendant, is clearing up: "Things'll hot up now the weather's turning. They'll be falling over themselves to get here now. All them faded tans and clogged up pores." She sighs heavily while wiping down the tables.

Upstairs in the foyer Ted, another attendant, comes to pass the time of day. He is proud of the place, proud of its popularity: "Locals come, office people come, everybody comes." He has salutary tales to tell about "all this health business". A young policeman, only 32, collapsed and died at the swimming pool. A man who felt funny after his Turkish bath asked to lie down and never got up again. "You see, you can have too much health." What does he do to relax? "I go the betting shop," he replies, surprised that I need to ask. ●

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Peter Schrank

THE WORLD ORDER

The phoney peace

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait shattered the euphoria of 1989. Paul Hirst analyses the new world order defined by the Gulf crisis

The period between the east European revolutions of 1989 and Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait now stands revealed as a "phoney peace"—a euphoric interlude which affected the whole spectrum of western opinion from right to left. Only a few weeks ago the dominant issues on the agenda in the US and Europe were the end of the cold war and the likely size of the "peace dividend". Even hard-liners were debating the scale of cuts possible in the US and British war machines.

But now we are suddenly plunged back into a classical crisis. The old brutal necessities of international politics have reasserted themselves and the US war machine is mobilised in the Gulf. The analogies with the 1930s have been instantly recycled; Saddam is compared to Hitler, the dangers of appeasement are repeated endlessly. The west's cold-war language has been put back into use with little reflection and little irony about how brief was the new era of world peace.

The time is right, with a major war still likely, to look at the world of nation states in a longer perspective, to stop see-sawing between euphoria and despair in reaction to events. First, the Gulf crisis at least partly confirms the "realist" approach to international relations. The "realists" argue that while the world order is made up of independent states, many of them formidably armed, then the potential for conflicts of interest between states means that any state

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that wants to protect its interests must match the military capacity of the others. The danger of war is therefore built into the international system. This danger exists without reference to the ideological motivations or the systems of government of the states in question. Iraq received massive western diplomatic support, trade credits and military aid during its war with Iran. It is now an enemy, and Iran a possible ally. Iraq is not an enemy because it is a murderous tyranny—it has been that for years—but because its foreign policy objectives conflict with those of the west.

Taking a "realist" approach, how are the states of the world going to shake down in the 21st century? Up to 1989, the world remained much as it was when it was carved up at Yalta in 1945. At Yalta the western powers practised classic power diplomacy. They had to concede an extended Soviet "sphere of influence" because Soviet forces had the capacity to seize and hold east Europe. Britain declared war over the invasion of Poland, but was forced to concede that state to Soviet hegemony. The world was divided into two opposing armed blocs, each under the hegemony of a superpower: the Soviet Union or the US. The US became the linchpin of a "western" system of alliances, guaranteeing from Germany to Japan a capacity to resist Soviet expansion.

One important element not decided at Yalta was the fate of the European colonial empires. As these colonies were given, or seized, their independence, so the third world emerged, often bloodily drawing in the superpowers. The US and Soviet Union invested regional conflicts with their own antagonistic interests—both increasing the stakes in purely local confrontations to the brink of world war and yet restraining their regional allies to act within certain limits because of that very risk. From the mid-1950s, the nuclear stalemate imposed a condition of deterrence on both superpowers and their allies. The US and USSR were nearly immobilised by the fear of nuclear confrontation.

This bipolar world imposed a rigid superpower order on possible conflicts, yet it contained the threat of disaster should deterrence fail. It was a world on the brink of nuclear breakdown. The danger of annihilation drove the superpowers into repeated *rapprochements*, recurrent "thaws" and "freezes", and the institutionalisation of deterrence through arms limitation. We are now in the largest and warmest of the "thaws". The inability of the Soviet Union to sustain the contest has brought about large changes in the unstable world order. Soviet hegemony, as it existed between 1945 and 1989, is at an end.

Two of the three elements of the post-Yalta world have dissolved. The Soviets and the west will soon cease to confront each other directly in Europe. The east European *cordon sanitaire* that existed between Russia and the west from 1919 and 1939 will be restored. This removes the threat of a Soviet conventional attack. To secure a settlement with the west, Soviet policy must also resolve major regional conflicts, no longer confronting the west in the third world. But this means that regional conflicts are no longer restrained by the threat of world war. A regional challenger to the hegemony of the superpowers—as we see with Iraq—may pursue its objects with greater vigour.

Soviet retreat removes one superpower from conventional adventures in regional conflict—while, that is, Moscow is ensnared in internal reforms and desperately trying to prevent defections from the Union. But the US is not in retreat. On the contrary, the end of confrontation in Europe frees US military power for use elsewhere in the world—and the Soviet retreat means that the US faces fewer constraints on its use. Contrary to fashionable claims, like Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, the US is not in terminal decline and its power is not dissolving away. The US remains far and away the largest economy in the world. It is a vital market for German and Japanese goods—Japan would be ruined by a trade war with the US and knows it. The US is the world's greatest primary producer, and would be substantially self-sufficent were it not so profligate. The US has the unquestioned technical and numerical edge in advanced weaponry. And, finally, its political leadership remains resolutely committed to the role of being *the* world power.

The Gulf has revealed something that the thesis of American decline and the growing multipolarity of world politics ignored. The free-market economies of the west are too fragmented and too weakly armed to sustain the free international trading system on which their prosperity depends, without the US. None of the "mercantile" powers—Japan, Germany, the rest of the EC—has the capacity to check Saddam Hussein and protect the oil supplies on which western wealth depends. The United States is simultaneously the leading mercantile power and the greatest military power. Without the US forces in the Gulf, the west would be faced with a crisis that all its wealth could not resolve and in which that wealth was at stake. The US is thus still the *capo dei capi* of the western free-trading system and there is no replacement in sight.

Peace turns out to be conservative: rich nations enjoy greater security, poorer nations will live with greater inequality

This fact can be viewed in several ways. First, that it takes a showdown to reveal the true balance of power—Japan, for all its economic success, is a military and political weakling, Germany a limited regional power, Britain and France midgets. The EC and Japan emerge as junior partners who must accept US leadership in all matters of life and death for the western free-market system. Europeans are privileged members of an informal empire. The US does not "dominate" the west in the manner of an old-fashioned empire. But on the key issues of world power, the centre of independent decision remains Washington.

From a radical third-world perspective, the emerging international order of the 1990s is bad news. Third-world states that challenge the US or threaten vital interests of the west face domination—not old-style colonial occupation, but the restriction of their leaderships and policies to those coincident with western interests, by force if need be. And remember, not all third-world leaders will be thugs like Saddam Hussein or Manuel Noriega. Some will be pursuing popular policies and seeking to redress what they see, often rightly, as exploitation and injustice. They will no longer find a champion to counter the US—Moscow will be too busy with affairs in Riga or Tashkent.

We have not entered a new era of "world peace" and an end to violence between states. Rather the terms of violent interaction between states have changed. Peace, like war, benefits the strongest. The end of the cold war benefits the west, but it may be to the detriment of others. Peace turns out to be a distinctly conservative state: rich nations enjoy greater security, poorer nations will probably have to live with greater injustice. It is no use just moralising against this. The left is bad at recognising the facts of power politics beyond its control. It finds it difficult to accept that states are not moral agents but pursue "interests": that is, power and wealth. No more is there any reason naïvely to accept that fact, to surrender to *realpolitik*. The world is grossly unequal. Countless millions are starving, sick, ill-housed and ill-educated and their position is often becoming worse. We cannot shut our eyes and pretend that the world exists for the west alone.

If Saddam Hussein were not a vile tyrant, but a democratic leader of a poor country challenging the west head on, seeking better terms by staking out a claim to a vital resource, the US would still be mounting its huge military

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and political offensive against Iraq. President Bush might have less world support, but he would still use his power to make US aims prevail. We on the left might oppose him, but we couldn't stop him. A long list of states around the world know what US hegemony means. The recent past is littered with radical regimes toppled to suit US policy within its "sphere of influence".

The future shape of international relations, then, is determined by the fact that we live in a world of competing nation states, in which further conflicts of interest and major wars will occur in the foreseeable future. This world is dominated by one hegemonic military power, whose authority is reconfirmed in crises which threaten vital western interests. In this world, conventional forces and a massive American military machine will remain, and American power will be enhanced because hostile regional powers will no longer automatically attract large-scale Soviet aid and arms.

The final element of the old post-Yalta world remains intact. The two superpowers still have massive nuclear arsenals targeted at one another. Hostility has diminished to the point where nuclear war has become a remote danger, but the capacity to fight such a war remains. Even if the superpower nuclear arsenals are cut by half, even if battlefield nuclear weapons are removed from Europe, they hold a nuclear megatonnage sufficient to kill us all several times over. We cannot ignore this. Real security can only come if all nuclear weapons are eliminated, and deterrence is based on the capacity to manufacture them—as Jonathan Schell advocates in *The Abolition*. That can only happen if the superpowers become the sole possessors of that capacity, and can force lesser states to dismantle their nuclear facilities. That implies joint US-Soviet nuclear hegemony under the auspices of the UN. We are far from this at present. In fact, we can't control proliferation of these arms and have the added concern of a major state with a vast nuclear arsenal, the Soviet Union, whose future shape and leadership are wholly uncertain.

Elements on the US right gloated at the prospect of the break-up of the Soviet Empire. But then the more hard-headed of them asked, "Who will control the nukes?" US policy is now directed towards sustaining Gorbachev and Soviet unity. It's in America's interests for the Soviet Union to remain substantially intact under a stable regime that can control its nuclear arsenal and make rational decisions about its size and deployment. That's why the US has offered little or no help to the Baltic states and views the possible defection of the Ukraine with nothing short of horror. The Soviet break-up was an ideological goal of the US in the cold war, now it is contrary to American interests.

In fact, the US actively desires a limited Soviet hegemony. Unacceptable in Afghanistan, it is now vital to the US in the Soviet periphery. The US simply cannot afford for Russian dominion to end in regions outside its own direct influence. The US and Soviets have a common interest in containing Islam and, therefore, the US has a direct interest in sustaining Soviet rule in Central Asia.

West Europe needs the US as guarantor of the free trading system to which it belongs

The odds are that fears of Soviet break-up are exaggerated. Even if the Baltic states, Moldavia and parts of the Caucasus are allowed to secede, Russia will remain a major power, stretching from the Polish border to Vladivostock and containing the vast bulk of Soviet industrial capacity, raw materials and military power. A threat to the integrity of that core "Russian" state will in all probability provoke a correspondingly great Russian nationalist response. In a crisis, a post-communist Russian political élite will emerge to secure Russian control of the Eurasian landmass. Such a state might be a democracy and develop a market economy. It might be content with its own borders and enter a period of semi-isolationism. But it might be none of these things. Russia in the early 21st century might be strong and stroppy enough to take an active interest in regional questions adjacent to its own borders. East Europe might be fragmented, poor and unstable. Central Asia, outside of Russian hegemony, will certainly be so.

Here lie the roots of possible future conflicts between Russia and the west and the Islamic world. An unstable east Europe, controlled by neither the Atlantic Alliance nor Russia, will pose a threat to peace. A successful east Europe, with democracy and market economies, will inevitably push the "west" to the Russian border. Unless Russia is also democratic and prosperous, this raises the spectre of a new armed frontier in place of the old. Until the new east Europe takes shape, therefore, European disarmament will be less than total and US military withdrawal from Europe less than complete. Nato will remain in place, if on a reduced scale, for compelling strategic and geopolitical reasons. It offers the Soviets insurance against Germany, for example. Mrs Thatcher's caution is excessive, but there are rational reasons to doubt the most optimistic views about a new European security order.

There were hopes that the Soviet retreat would make possible a Europe free of US intervention. On the left, these hopes had a neutralist character; among "European nationalists" the retreat offered the vision of a united EC as a great power. But Europe is unlikely to become an integral superstate, however integrated its economies become. The strong national identities of the participating states will continue to be expressed in distinct foreign policies and military forces. The EC will increasingly act as one on certain issues, but as a confederation of states and not as a single power. A neutralist Europe is equally unlikely. West Europe needs the US as guarantor of the free trading system to which it belongs. Further, in being linked to the US, the European Nato states have some influence over its policies and can restrain its actions. In the Gulf and in other crises, the left should seek a concerted European policy and, as part of that policy, to restrain US actions which are inconsistent not merely with our own interests, but with justice for third-world states and peoples.

The left still tends to place its hopes in the United Nations in this uncertain post-Yalta world. But while that world is shaped by competing nation states and the possibility of war, international organisations like the UN can have at best a limited role. They can act as as forums for debate and mobilisation; but, in the last instance, they can't buck the realities of economic and military power when major states embark on a policy that may lend to conflict. UN sanctions would be far weaker and international resolve far less certain in the absence of the massive deployment of US forces in the Gulf. The UN is simply not effective enough to sustain the role the left imposes on it. It has become the comfort blanket for which the left reaches when it's got to confront a difficult problem of foreign policy.

We cannot rely on a politics of gesture or moral condemnation. A serious foreign policy for Britain-in-Europe must recognise international realities. We must know who our country's allies and potential enemies are, how we can influence our allies, and when we must oppose them, how we can contain our enemies without war and when, *in extremis*, we must fight. To do so is essential. Otherwise "realism" in foreign policy, the capacity to respond effectively to crises, to assess international necessities beyond our control, becomes the preserve of the right. Actually the right isn't very good at this either, but the left's apparent weakness confers political advantage to it that spills out well beyond foreign affairs. ●

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The oilmen's blow-out

Major accidents have put iron in the soul of the workers. The campaign for safe working conditions will go on, says Charles Woolfson

When workers occupy their workplace in the bleak emptiness of the North Sea, something more than a mere gesture is being made. At the very least, they are collectively making a dramatic and powerful statement of grievance. But they are doing so with a determination that is probably as much a surprise to themselves as it is to the oil operators and their contracting companies.

While the wider geopolitics of oil have added a strategic dimension to the dispute, the key to that mood of determination lies within the terrible legacy of the 1988 Piper Alpha disaster and the unresolved traumas that all the near-Pipers since have reinforced. The hundreds of workers who staged the sit-ins on the Shell platforms and other installations of the East Shetland basin have now been removed by court order, but their sit-ins and the one-day stoppages both on- and offshore which accompanied them have jeopardised the future maintenance and production schedules of the oil majors.

The issues of safety and trade union recognition are inextricably intertwined. Only weeks after 167 men died in the Piper Alpha blaze, the Ocean Odyssey rig blew up and there have been half-a-dozen major accidents since. The perception of the workforce is that little has changed in the past two years, and that the changes made have come about with hardly any input from their own representatives. The statutory safety committees have no formal trade union representatives. But without union recognition, and therefore a measure of protection from dismissal for shop stewards, the men fear that those who speak up for them will continue to be confronted by management intimidation and the ultimate sanction, NRB (*not required back*).

Ocean Odyssey's burnt and blackened structure now lies in Dundee harbour, a few hundred yards from the passing railway carriage windows. To the daily shuttle of oilmen up and down the east coast it is a grim reminder of all that is wrong in this industry. And testimony to the Ocean Odyssey inquiry, still being held in Aberdeen, reveals in detail the kind of pressure men are under not to raise questions which might slow down the scramble for oil.

The rig, on charter to Arco, was on a "frontier operation", trying to drill one of the deepest wells in the North Sea. At a depth of 16,000 feet, a huge gas blow-back caused explosions which ripped through the rig, which was then engulfed in a gigantic fireball. The onshore fire chief, who was sent out to the rig, described it as "a giant cooking pot with flames underneath". It was a miracle that only one man died—Timothy Williams, a 25-year-old radio operator on his first trip offshore. It took two days before firemen could cut through huge metal doors, jammed shut in the intense heat, to look for his body. Seven men were pulled from the water after jumping for their lives. An eighth man was rescued from a platform leg. One man who'd fallen asleep was rushing in his slippers for dinner in the mess when he met the rig captain, wearing breathing apparatus, who asked him why he was still on board. An Arco drilling superintendent described this shambles as "a textbook evacuation".

Witnesses claim that there was a smell of gas on the rigs

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Eight men have been killed offshore since they began their industrial action this summer

for days before the explosion. A data engineer said he reported rising gas levels to a drilling supervisor who replied, "Okay, boy, I know," and replaced the telephone receiver. Glen Hull, the safety supervisor, said that he had received no formal offshore safety training, even though he'd repeatedly asked for it, and that he had "never been told what to do in the event of an emergency such as the build-up of gas". On the day of the explosion, drilling resumed for the first time in 12 days. According to James Murphy, a drill fluid engineer, the leading drillers were warned they must buck up their ideas or they would be found "a nice little rig out in the Syrian desert".

Murphy disagreed with the decision to resume drilling, as there wasn't enough drilling fluid (known as "mud") and they had run out of baryte, as essential weighting agent. But an assistant, Neil Williams, who approached the supervisor was told, "I don't give a fuck how much baryte we've got, just get the 'mud' weight up." Murphy confirmed other evidence that the gas monitors were not working properly and that one of the hand-held monitors being used had "registered off the scale" on one occasion.

A delegation of workers asked the Arco supervisor on board to shut the well down and move the rig off-station, "because what was happening was beyond the comprehension of most people on board". But a driller, Derek Wacey, said that when an oilworker did finally shut the well down, because of the influx of gas into the drill hole, the supervisor said to him, "Let's get on with the drill!" Even the Department of Energy's own inspector has testified that the rig was being run in a "haphazard manner" and that the relationship between the master and crew had broken down in the "them and us" atmosphere on board.

Oil companies have begun to invest in a safety programme, but many offshore workers argue that their installations—their operating life having been extended well past that originally envisaged—are in little better condition than they were before Piper. They scorn the claim of the oil companies that their actions are jeopardising vital safety measures. The emergency underwater shut-off valves which were to be installed this month in anticipation of the Cullen report on the Piper Alpha disaster were first recommended ten years ago by the Burgoyne report on the offshore oil industry.

The industry has tried for years to demonstrate that it can police itself voluntarily. It strenuously resisted one of the central demands of the workforce—that the industry come under the independent control of the Health and Safety Executive. The employers want to retain a general responsibility for safety, but they now recognise that some kind of independent scrutiny is inevitable. They profess to be neutral between the claims of the HSE and the Department of Energy (DE). At the moment, the department is responsible both for safety offshore and for production of oil. The two duties are scarcely compatible.

One safety innovation is in fact a DE hotline. The telephone number is on the back of every cabin door. I was there when workers telephoned the Aberdeen number to report unsafe procedures for shifting men from a barge to an offshore installation. They were answered by a recorded message asking them to telephone the London office. Another tape-recorded instruction awaited them on that number. It's no wonder that the offshore workers place no great faith in these changes.

In fact, eight men have been killed offshore since they began their industrial action this summer with an overtime ban. Six men died when the rear rotor of their helicopter caught the crane on the Brent Spar tanker loading facility as it came in to land; seven more men on the same flight survived what should have been a routine crew change on a calm day. Only days before, a contract worker was struck into the water by a hawser, perhaps the most dangerous tackle to work with in a marine environment. The eighth man died when a pipe exploded on a platform.

Accidents like these have put iron into the souls of the offshore workers. They have hardly any formal employment protection, apart from individual grievance procedures. For years after they were defeated in the industry's last major strike, in 1979, they were cowed by the employers. They suffered blacklists, job losses and arbitrary wage cuts. But below the surface, discontent was blowing up to blow-out proportions. Last summer the offshore workers rocked the industry for nine weeks with a wave of unofficial stoppages. They were promised ballots on union recognition, but the employers reneged on the deal.

It is said that the contracting companies came under pressure not to concede from UKOOA, the oil operators' association. This kind of industrial relations gamesmanship at one remove is one of the complicating factors in the dispute. This time it misfired, for the workers had decided that life offshore would never be the same again. Plans were laid for this summer's more controlled round of actions. Mass meetings of oil workers discussed the lessons of the previous year. The key decision taken was to sit in on the platforms, for they had learned that every platform voluntarily vacated by locked-out workers could quickly be filled by imported strike-breakers.

The current campaign is run by an unofficial grassroots body, OILC (the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee). It is a real movement from below which has transformed itself in just 18 months from a loose ad hoc movement into a practised rank-and-file organisation operating nationally. Much has been made of the articulate leadership of its chairman Ronnie McDonald. But OILC draws its strength from a collective sense of injustice. The sooner the employers recognise this, and stop looking for "agitators" or worse, the sooner a reasonable framework of industrial relations can be created in the industry. For the moment they are being anything but reasonable. Up to about 1,500 offshore workers have been sacked and the signs are that they are seeking to scour out "the activists" who have taken the lead this summer.

OILC is in part the creation of this government's trade union legislation and the employers' hostility towards collective bargaining. Official trade unions haven't been able to establish themselves and OILC has filled the vacuum. But, paradoxically, the unofficial body is now engaged in a struggle for recognition not for itself, but on behalf of the official trade unions with which its own relations have not always been rosy. But, for the moment, the unofficial and official trade union bodies are moving in unison. Yesterday, OILC was to meet the national officials of the seven offshore unions at the TUC Congress in Blackpool. In the meantime, OILC has declared a temporary moratorium on future actions to allow the official trade unions to move in—and to get its men back on the platforms.

Like previous occupations in Scotland, the offshore workers' action may well establish a new political moment. The work-in at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971-72 became a focus for discontent over the destruction of Scotland's heavy industrial base. The result was the Heath government's U-turn. The 1987 occupation of Caterpillar, "the plant with a future", threw into relief the government's inability to defend even modern plant in the face of corporate multinational restructuring. That set the seal on the eclipse of Scottish Conservatism.

The North Sea may become the symbol of the struggle to re-establish trade unionism after ten years of suppression. What is at stake is whether the multinationals will be able to impose on British workers, directly or indirectly, labour practices developed in the exploitation of the third world. Not for nothing has the North Sea been dubbed "Europe's banana republic". ●

Charles Woolfson lectures in industrial relations at the Department of Social and Economic Research at Glasgow University. He is working with John Foster on a study of the offshore workers' campaign

The Politics of the UCS Work-in, *John Foster and Charles Woolfson, Lawrence & Wishart, 1986* Track Record: the story of the Caterpillar Occupation, *Charles Woolfson and John Foster, Verso, 1988*

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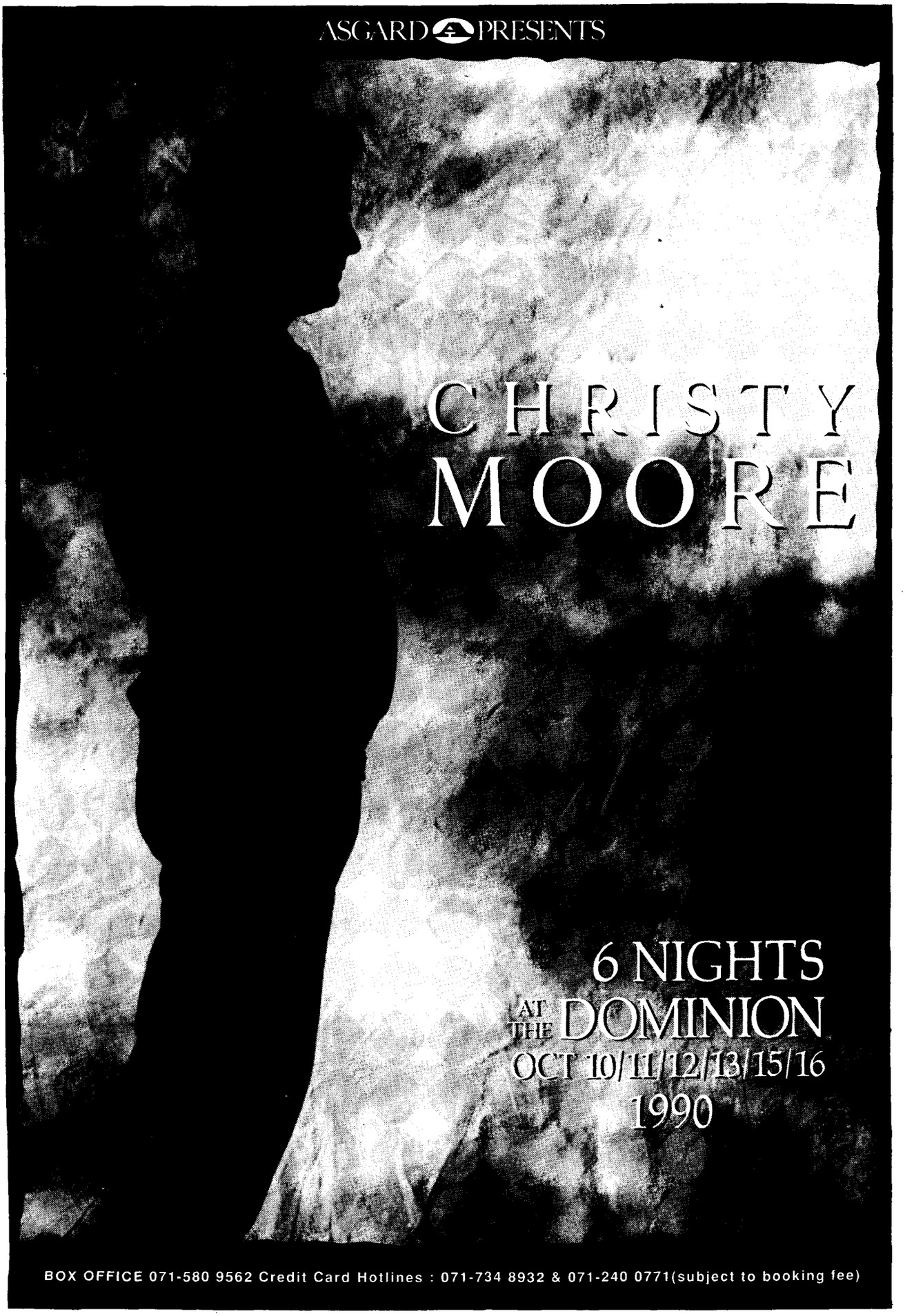

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I confess...

Confessions aren't suspect only in political cases like the Birmingham Six—they always are. Jolyon Jenkins explains

"How do you ever know when a man has told you the truth?"

"There is a certain tone," Joll said. "A certain tone enters the voice of a man who is telling the truth... I am speaking of a situation in which I am probing for the truth, in which I have to exert pressure to find it. First I get lies, you see—this is what happens—first lies, then pressure, then more lies, then more pressure, then the break, then more pressure, then the truth. That is how you get the truth."

Pain is truth: all else is subject to doubt.

J M Coetzee—Waiting for the Barbarians

All that stands between the Birmingham Six and freedom are words—the disputed confessions of Richard McIlkenny, Billy Power, Johnny Walker and Hugh Callaghan. The forensic evidence against the Six was discredited five years ago, with the discovery that the test which was supposed to prove the presence of explosives on their hands could have been triggered by something as innocuous as playing cards.

The confessions are all that is left of the Crown case—and the four men have always claimed that those statements were either fabricated by the police, or forced out of them by beatings and psychological pressure. Last week the Home Secretary announced that the case was to go to the Court of Appeal for a third time. New forensic evidence has been discovered which suggests irregularities in one of the interview records.

You don't have to be mad, or stupid, or tortured, to admit to something you haven't done

All the confessions are short on verifiable detail (and sometimes contain provable inaccuracies), but long on contrition and catharsis. Power's statement starts: "I'm glad it's all come out" and ends: "Jesus, I'm sorry. I wish this day had never come." Callaghan's finishes: "I am sorry. I have never done anything like this before. I'm not even a member of the IRA." Walker's concludes: "I want to apologise for all the damage and injury I have caused. I have brought complete shame on my family. I am full of sorrow and remorse."

At one level, confessions are just witness statements —like any other, except that the inherent unlikeliness of self-incrimination makes them unusually persuasive. But they also have an important symbolic significance. The confession in the police interviewing room may seem a far cry from the religious confession, but they have a common historical root. As Michel Foucault points out (in his *History of Sexuality*), "since the Middle Ages at least, western societies have established the confession as one of the main rituals we rely upon for the production of truth."

This latter aspect—symbolic and cathartic—often seems to matter most to the police. Their investigations frequently appear to be directed not at finding out who committed a crime, but at persuading someone to admit to it. And, like Colonel Joll in J M Coetzee's novel, they seem to think that truth only emerges *in extremis*. Why else is it that a confession, clearly made under the duress of interrogation, is considered more convincing than its calmer retraction? Why else do they go to such well-documented lengths to stop suspects exercising their right to see a solicitor in custody?

And how else to explain some of the confessions which the police have brought before the courts—statements which, considered purely as witness evidence, are valueless? Winston Silcott, convicted of the murder of PC Blakelock in the 1985 Broadwater Farm riots, is alleged to have told the police: "You ain't got enough evidence. Those kids won't give evidence in court. No one will talk to you. You can't keep me away from them." That, and an allegedly "guilty posture", was the *only* evidence against him.

Or consider the case of Margaret Livesey, a middle-aged woman who in 1979 was sentenced to life imprisonment for the ritual torture and knife murder of her teenage son. The prosecution case never made any kind of sense (no motive was ever produced) and relied purely on her verbal confession made after several hours of interrogation: "well, if you say I've done it, then I must have but I don't remember" —and a later written statement: "I am sorry for the trouble I have cause [*sic*] the police, but I honestly did not realised [*sic*] I had done it until tonight." Mrs Livesey was released from prison last year.

The most celebrated case of discredited confession evidence is, of course, that of the Guildford Four—where, once again, the confessions were all the Crown had. Guildford has certainly increased public scepticism about confessions. But there is a danger of the case being regarded as wholly exceptional, and as proof that the police must have been under extreme political pressure to get results, and must in turn have put unbearable pressure on their suspects to confess—metaphorically, the thumb-screws.

In fact, even in normal times, confessions are not to be trusted. There is a mass of experimental psychological evidence to show that you don't have to be mad, or stupid, or under torture, to admit to something you haven't done. Sometimes people confess because they see an immediate benefit in doing so, and expect to be able to establish the truth later. (Perhaps they have compelling personal reasons for wanting to get out of the police station quickly.) But sometimes, too, suspects become genuinely convinced, at

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least temporarily, that they did the thing they are accused of.

Two eminent psychiatrists at the Bethlem Royal Hospital, Gisli Gudjonnson (a former police inspector) and James MacKeith, have studied hundreds of cases of retracted confessions in an attempt to discover what makes people confess—and in particular what leads them to make false confessions. An important factor, they have discovered, is "interrogative suggestibility"—the tendency to accept uncritically information communicated during questioning.

A person's suggestibility can't always be detected in a simple interview. But it can be measured, using a standard test devised by Gudjonnson. His research shows that people who confess to crimes but then retract their confessions tend to be far more suggestible than people who stoutly deny guilt from the first, despite forensic evidence against them. People who retract confessions aren't of course always innocent, but the fact that many of them share a psychological characteristic not easily detectable is disturbing.

The other psychological factor which seems likely to lead to false confessions, say MacKeith and Gudjonnson, is "compliance"—the tendency to do what you're told by authority figures. It's not always necessary to use force. Suspects can be manipulated more subtly than that. The police can, for example, work on guilty feelings about something else. "I've certainly seen cases where guilt has been manipulated in police interviews," says Gudjonnson.

But a psychologist who tries to give evidence of this kind in court, and particularly before the Appeal Court, is likely to get a far cooler reception than, for example, the forensic pathologist with his battery of chemical tests. The criminal justice system continues to rely on a model of the mind virtually unchanged since Descartes's time—as though Freud (say) never existed. Judges think a confession is a confession is a confession. Why should someone say they've done something if they haven't?

The Broadwater Farm affair illustrates the dangers. The case of Winston Silcott is well known by now, but it's often forgotten that 42 people went to prison for alleged offences arising out of the riots. Thirty-nine of them were convicted on the basis solely of confession evidence. Two, Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite, were convicted, with Silcott, of PC Blakelock's murder. For two days, Raghip refused to admit to doing anything more than throw stones and help overturn a vehicle. Then he suddenly changed his mind, and said he had been carrying a weapon—a broom handle. Finally, a confession: "I might have kicked him [Blakelock] or hit him with the broom handle but I wouldn't have done no more." Braithwaite also made an eventual confession—that he had hit *another* policeman with an iron bar.

For the Appeal Court hearing, Raghip's lawyers commissioned Gisli Gudjonnson to assess his suggestibility. He scored exceptionally highly. But the judges refused to accept that this was significant. They pointed to the fact that Raghip's IQ was above 70, and therefore at the bottom end of the "normal" range. This meant, they said, that expert evidence about his psychological make-up was inadmissible—it was a matter for the jury alone. It was a nonsensical argument, because suggestibility is not confined to people with low IQs, but it demolished Raghip's chances of appeal. (Carole Richardson of the Guildford Four and Margaret Livesey also scored abnormally highly on the Gudjonnson suggestibility test, and the Appeal Court refused to pay any attention in those cases either.)

Mark Braithwaite's confession also becomes more explicable in the light of an independent psychological assessment commissioned by the BBC for its *Inside Story* programme on the Broadwater Farm convictions. It showed what no one had suspected before—that he suffered from claustrophobia. This fact suddenly made his behaviour in police detention understandable. He had frequently asked to be taken out of the cell for more questioning, and kept sticking his arm out through the hole in the cell door. Questioning is usually the most stressful part of police detention, yet Braithwaite found it preferable to staying in the cell. It wouldn't be surprising if, under such conditions, he told the police what he thought they wanted to hear.

The Home Secretary is currently considering whether to refer the Broadwater Farm cases back to the Appeal Court. But even if he does, the chances of the court starting to take psychological evidence seriously aren't great. It is easy to see why. Once it is accepted that the mind is not a robust piece of machinery that functions perfectly under all conditions, a kind of radical scepticism about *all* confessions could quickly follow. And for the Appeal Court judge, no less than for a 19th-century vicar, Doubt is the enemy which must never be yielded to.●

John Storey

Why is a confession made under duress more convincing than a calmer retraction?

Silcott, Raghip and Braithwaite were convicted of PC Blakelock's murder on suspect confessions. Thirty-nine others went to prison for alleged offences arising out of the Broadwater Farm riots, 36 of them on confessions alone

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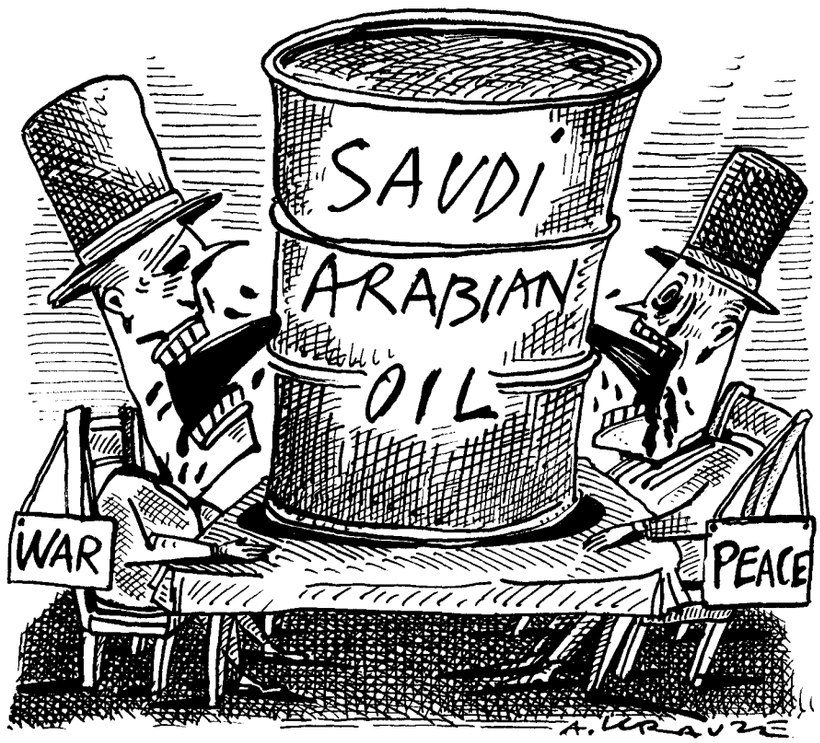
Hawks and doves

Bush has taken the US to the brink of war but American opinion is split. Alexander Cockburn reports



Andrzej Krauze

New York

After some first maladroit lunges, Iraqi propagandists are showing more of a feel for the American pulse with the charge that George Bush has secret financial interests in the Saudi Arabian oil fields and wants to drive up the price of oil. The Iraqi information minister, Latif Nasif Jasim, told US reporters that Baghdad had got hold of "secret documents" showing Bush to be a partner "in oil companies with Saudi Arabia and maybe Kuwait". The "maybe" is a pleasing touch, suggesting scholarly determination not to overstep the mark in assessing the evidence for presidential malfeasance.

Most Americans are intellectually and temporarily disposed to believe that Big Oil is behind the whole thing, gave the nod to Saddam Hussein to take over Kuwait and thus, without much delay, double oil prices. It's also probably true that oil stocks are a constituent of Bush's portfolio and, though this portfolio is held in a blind trust, a truly malfeasant president could trundle about Kennebunkport golf course secure in the thought that in all likelihood his net worth had increased handsomely, in tandem with his forceful handling of the crisis.

The north east, where President Bush took his tormented vacation, is of course an oil-importing region and, the colder the weather, as the blockade wears on, the more the tempers of consumers will frazzle as they look at their oil-heating bills. The oil-producing states—Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana mainly—are not nearly so dismayed since they stand to take in several billion in extra revenue. For Bush, with a holiday home in Maine but an official residence and stock portfolio anchored in Texas, the Lord is certainly giving more than he's taking away.

The Iraqis will no doubt be getting into all these matters in forthcoming propaganda communiqués. The closer they stick to oil-company profits, the more they will endear themselves to blue-collar America which, even in these sedated times, still holds certain things to be self-evident, starting with the innate criminality of the Seven Sisters. Scholars in Mr Jasim's information ministry can remind Americans of other crises, such as the Suez invasion, in whose wake the US Justice Department filed criminal anti-trust charges against 29 oil companies which had colluded in raising prices. But Eisenhower was almost as cosy with Big Oil as Bush and it was not long before the case was shifted to Oklahoma where federal judge Royce A Savage dismissed the charges, subsequently leaving the bench and embarking on a new career as a vice-president of Gulf Oil.

The populist sensibility which very reasonably sees oil companies as taproots of evil is also isolationist by instinct. The Iraqi ambassador in Washington has undoubtedly been reporting to Baghdad that the most conspicuous opposition to President Bush's immense deployment of resources towards the Gulf has come from the old isolationist wing of the Republican Party. There is a certain forced perspective here. The left has been demonstrating against a new era of US imperial police work in the Gulf, but the television networks and major newspapers have contrived a political spectrum which stops abruptly about two-thirds of the way through the Democratic Party, so most people don't know what the left thinks about anything, or whether indeed there is a left at all.

On the other hand, they do know what right-wingers like Pat Buchanan (former speech-writer for Nixon and Reagan) or Rowland Evans and Robert Novak (conservative columnists) or Jeane Kirkpatrick think because the corporate press endlessly displays their views. All of these emblems of the harder right have opposed US escalation of the crisis.

Even though the appeal is to a sensibility automatically labelled "isolationist", it is absurd to call Buchanan and the rest of them isolationists within the historical meaning of the term. Buchanan has spent most of his life writing speeches and columns urging war, and Evans, Novak and Kirkpatrick have similarly been choristers of the blood-dimmed tide. Isolationism as a conspicuous political force died when Truman swung Republican leaders behind his cold-war commitment in 1946. As an institutional presence on the political

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landscape, isolationism lives on in the Libertarian Party and the Cato Institute, one of whose house intellectuals, Ted Galen Carpenter, did write a very eloquent attack on Bush's commitment to the Saudis and to the territorial integrity of Kuwait.

With the Soviet Union out of the picture, someone like Buchanan may feel that no sheikh or emir's gold-plated tap is worth American lives unless US national security is threatened, which it plainly is not. Buchanan has always thundered against deporting Nazi war criminals to face the music in Russia and therefore may not find the Saddam-as-Hitler taunts as alluring as some. Evans and Novak have for years been highly unusual among US syndicated columnists in that they have attacked successive US administrations for narrow-minded concern with the Israeli interest and with the American-Jewish lobby, to the exclusion of wider considerations of diplomacy in the Middle East. This is not to be interpreted as sympathy for Palestinians, as against the "balance of power" and other things dear to the pundit mind.

Oddest of all voyagers in this anti-Bush caravanserai is Kirkpatrick, who in origin is a charter member of cold-war liberalism, the regnant creed of postwar imperial adventure. Unlike the others, she has been an ardent exponent of the Israeli interest and should by rights be shoulder to shoulder with the pundit faction roaring for war. So her position is baffling unless we assume that her lecture fees have been falling and she calculates that a bit of heterodoxy will pump up her appeal.

Thus far Bush's strategy has been popular, as any exhibition of military resolve by the commander-in-chief always is in its early stages. Contrary to familiar strophes about the chilling effect of body-bags shipped home to face the funeral music, Americans won't rebel against their young being slaughtered so long as the cause is thought to be decent. Here's where there is already uncertainty. Decency is not

Americans won't rebel against their young being slaughtered so long as the cause is thought to be decent

something Americans have been schooled over the years to regard as a quality intrinsic to Arabs. Ever since 1973 cartoons reminiscent of the old Nazi cartoons of Jewish plutocrats have been depicting sheeted sheikhs gouging the occident.

Almost as high as sheikhs in recent demonology has been the UN, denounced as a "third world talking shop" consumed only with the desire to mock America and destroy Israel. So Bush's sudden discovery of the UN as the emblem of international justice is not something for which Americans have been prepared. You have to go back to the 1950s, when the US still controlled the place, to find much regard for the UN expressed by politicians or the press here.

So, support for Bush, however brawny his standing in the polls may look right now, is not something his strategists can take for granted. Two sectors of opinion are already oppressive factors in their calculations. Black America is already exhibiting markedly less support for war in the Gulf. A *Wall Street Journal* poll showed virtually a 50-50 split among blacks on the wisdom of military deployment. If war breaks out, blacks will be doing most of the fighting on the ground. Many of them anyway feel that President Reagan declared war on them back at the start of the eighties.

The other sector of concern to Bush is Wall Street. By Thursday 23 August, something close to panic had set in. Though the technical criterion for recession—back-to-back quarters showing negative growth—has not yet been met, *Business Week* formally announced at the start of August that recession has begun. The plunge in world markets, plus the soaring costs of military deployment and the prospect of war putting oil over $50 a barrel, began to weigh heavily on men paid millions to worry about such things.

By the weekend of 25-26 August, the atmosphere changed markedly. The cautiously worded UN resolution sanctioning collective action to enforce sanctions was hailed as a major diplomatic triumph which lessened the need for a go-it-alone US military initiative. By Monday, 27 August, William Safire, former colleague of Buchanan on Nixon's speech-writing team and most *clamant* of the war pundits, was lamenting in his *New York Times* column that "Long-time doves of the left, joined by anti-Israelites of the far right—plus sober second thinkers who want to give pacifism a chance—have combined forces to try to stop the world-wide momentum aimed at driving Saddam Hussein from power."

Unlike the Israeli government, which has been told by the Bush regime to keep its mouth shut, and placated by the promise of a billion dollars' worth of fresh arms, lobbyists for the Israeli interest, such as Safire and his colleague and former *New York Times* editor, A M Rosenthal, have been almost incoherent in their calls for an immediate strike against Baghdad.

The official editorial posture of the *New York Times* is that the US-UN mission will not be accomplished until Saddam Hussein has agreed to have his chemical and putative nuclear bomb factories demolished under international inspection. What neither Israel nor many of its supporters in the US cares to envisage is (a) Saddam extant after the crisis and (b) a post-crisis conference on territorial disputes in the region, as called for by Saddam Hussein as a prerequisite of withdrawal from Kuwait. Such a conference is something Israel has been exerting every effort to avoid for the past 20 years. Thus it is not uncommon to hear ominous speculation that Israel will launch a strike against Jordan or Iraq and that it is not impossible that a terrorist provocation in Israel might soon occur, offering the opportunity to launch just such a strike.

In the absence of military conflict most Americans have settled back to enjoy the war of position and manoeuvre being fought by the television networks on the edge of the fall season and facing a declining share of the market. ABC sent Ted Koppel to Baghdad as part of a rapid deployment policy. CBS countered with Dan Rather who captured Saddam Hussein or, as his rivals quickly suggested, was captured by the Iraqi president. Reporters, wearying of peaceful, news-less days beneath the Saudi sun, are beginning to send back frank dispatches about the fearful erosion of high-tech equipment by sand and sun. Back at home people ask themselves how come, after a $2 trillion Reagan military build-up, America's soldiers had to be sent to the Middle East on chartered civilian ships and airliners. The M-1 battle tanks were never tested in nose-to-tail deployment through sand. The high-speed fighter planes are little use against tanks, as are the hand-held TOW missiles in close-in engagements. The Stealths and B-52s are notoriously inaccurate and would probably end up hitting the four Shia sacred shrines in Iraq.

The pressure on Bush for a diplomatic settlement is growing. The White House last week acknowledged unofficial overtures from Saddam, relayed through a high official from a previous administration, probably former Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Murphy. But there is still a potent war faction and Iraqi propagandists might direct their attention to the Gulf of Tonkin and the celebrated incident that prompted Lyndon Johnson's escalation of war in Vietnam. ●

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LETTERS

An independent tabloid

I am glad that the *NSS* at last, if only by implication, accepts that the *Mail on Sunday* is not one of Mrs Thatcher's "tabloid trusties" ("Democratic dividend", 17 August).

The "tabloid trusties", you tell your readers, have failed to ask why the Gulf crisis, "such a grave turn in world events", has not led to the recall of parliament.

Just in case some of your readers, misled by previous references to the *Mail on Sunday* in your journal, have any doubts left on the subject, may I quote from our leading article of 19 August: "The phrase 'parliamentary sovereignty' jumps as easily to the lips of Margaret Thatcher as do the words 'Any more fares please?' to a bus conductor... Dissenters do exist who have different views from their own front-benchers. As the lives of British soldiers are at stake, they not only deserve to be heard but must be heard... Let's hear no more talk about parliamentary sovereignty from this Government or its supporters, not to mention the Labour front bench, until we have rather more evidence that they actually believe it... Our Parliament matters. Let the Government think upon that."

Stewart Steven
Editor, the Mail on Sunday
London W8

Exploiter and exploited

I have a number of reactions to your article on male prostitutes ("Boys' Own Stories", 24 August). First, I am not surprised that one confessed to his interviewer that he votes Tory. Thatcherism and prostitution are entirely compatible, as Thatcherism reduces everything, even human relationships, to commodities to be bought and sold and regulated by market forces.

The article challenged the stereotypical image of the male prostitute, usually the rent boy, as a victim, who takes to prostitution because he could not otherwise survive. Such an image is indeed a grotesque over-simplification; so is that of the exploited prostitute (rent boy, masseur, escort model, etc) and the exploiting punter (always described as old). From time to time over the past 20 years I have bought sex, not always from men younger than myself. I frequently felt that I was the exploited one.

The punter-prostitute relation epitomises the supremacy of economic values over human values.

While the article displayed a certain sympathy for the "rent boys" interviewed, and even admiration for the enterprising spirit of the young Tory voter, it reflected the contempt that society (and, frequently, prostitutes) holds for the buyers of sex who are dehumanised as "punters".

Leon Perks
Address supplied

Into the 21st century

Having enjoyed two weeks' holiday in Benidorm, it is only on my return that I have seen James Kelman's latest farrago regarding Glasgow 1990. Unfortunately, I must inform *NSS* readers that his account of Glasgow is a piece of fiction of which Jeffrey Archer would be proud.

Saloon-bar Stalinists certainly have their place in Glasgow's history— but in the past, not the future. There are virtually no depths of distortion or inaccuracy to which they will not stoop.

Bob Palmer, Neil Wallace and Julian Spalding have already responded to some of Kelman's inventions. Here are a few more facts—like the officials, I would not complain about well-founded criticism, but I must object to wilful untruths. For a start, the People's Palace never was a "semi-derelict building", and it never will be under a Labour administration. In fact, we have recently spent £2.6 million on improving the complex. Moreover, the success of the People's Palace is not due to the work of any individual or individuals, but is the result of the council's policy of investment in social history.

Second, there has been no curtailment of free speech in the City Chambers: it has always been the case—and quite rightly so—that the established decision-making process should not be undermined by unauthorised statements to the press. All that is required is collective responsibility from councillors and professionalism from officials.

Third, Fleshers' Haugh is not a piece of hallowed greenery, but an area of outdated and little-used gravel football pitches which the administration has a manifesto commitment to redevelop. The proposals under consideration would replace these with a £40 million leisure development which will be one of the finest in the United Kingdom, providing some 400 jobs in an area crying out for them. The intention is to provide facilities, including all-weather sports pitches, for men and women of all ages.

Fourth, the decision to demolish Queen Elizabeth Square in the Gorbals is supported by a large majority of local residents: if Kelman lived in these dreadful flats (or even visited them), he would agree.

I could go on. Many of us in Glasgow have devoted our political lives to the fight against poverty and deprivation in the city. I was born in the Gorbals and now sit as a councillor for Castlemilk, so I do not need Kelman to tell me how much still remains to be achieved. However, I am proud—as are most Glaswegians—that our city has attained through the efforts of its people an international reputation, not just as an artistic centre, but as a place where we get things done.

We make no apology for milking 1990, in the interests of our people, for all the development and investment that we can: to fail to do so would be to turn our backs on a golden opportunity. And we will have no truck with those who would reject the possibilities of the twenty-first century for their own version of what was in reality an inglorious past for working people.

Pat Lally
City Chambers
Glasgow

Glasgow's radical past

It is not entirely unexpected that the first people to rush into print attacking James Kelman's excellent article "Storm in the Palace" (3 August), should be a trio of officials who have a vested interest in the outcome of Glasgow's year of culture.

The letters from Spalding, Palmer and Wallace read like brochures from Saatchi and Saatchi, but the facts are that Glasgow's year as City of Culture has dismally failed to give any prominence to Glasgow's proud socialist and radical past. It has even omitted or played down any reference to Burns's or McDiarmid's association or ties with Glasgow. All this took place long before the shameful treatment of Elspeth King, the curator of the People's Palace. In contrast, Mr Mark O'Neil, the newly appointed curator of social history in Glasgow, acquired an international reputation overnight despite the fact that his only previous post was keeper at Glasgow's smallest but wealthiest museum in Springburn.

One of the many questions people are asking in Glasgow is how the import of megastars like Pavarotti and Sinatra enhances Glasgow's cultural image and why, when Glasgow is awash with singers and musicians of all kinds, we need to import buskers from the Continent. It is to be expected that the professional carpet baggers who follow most festivals should fail to understand what motivates writers like James Kelman. When the year of culture draws to a close they will look to another gravy train and move on; already kites have been flown in the direction of Edinburgh and Dublin.

The real tragedy of Glasgow's year of culture is that it has passed by the thousands of people in the schemes like Easterhouse, Castlemilk and Drunchapel. The only important letter to them is their Giro. Of what relevance is the year of culture to them?

Hugh Savage
Chairman, Friends of the People's Palace
Glasgow

Responsible disposal

It was sad to see Jolyon Jenkins's cynical view of "corporate greening" ("Who's the Greenest?", 17 August).

Sadder, too, to note the basic mistakes of fact: Rechem, he reports, "tried to import the Karen [*sic*] B's load of highly toxic PCBs from Canada".

Rechem was publicly acknowledged as having nothing to do with the *Karin B*. This vessel, with its untouchable cargo of toxic wastes, was a prime example of what can happen when such wastes are not responsibly managed and disposed of.

It is true that, on a quite separate occasion last summer, Rechem was stopped from importing a consignment of PCBs from Canada, a fact which attracted sensational coverage in the popular press.

This ignored the fact, however, that the best practicable environmental option for getting rid of PCBs is to destroy them by high-temperature incineration (which is Rechem's speciality). Indefinite

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storage is no option at all and will only lead to widescale leakage of PCBs into the environment.

Michael Snell
Manager, Group External Affairs
Rechem International Ltd
Hants

A lesson for Labour

Congratulations on publishing Dilip Hiro's excellent, anti-imperialist article on the history of the Arab ruling classes and western attempts to prop them up ("A few of our favourite kings", 17 August).

One wonders, however, if the Labour front bench will get a chance to read it. And if they do, will they understand the political implications it should have for them?

Keith Flett
Lansdowne Road
London N17

THIS ENGLAND

£5 book tokens for entries printed. (Postcards please)

● The tale of a policeman, whose holiday was ruined when he was forced to travel hundreds of miles to give evidence at a court case which did not take place, was cited yesterday as an example of how police are treated as "second-class citizens" by British courts.

The South Yorkshire branch of the Police Federation says the system should be changed to give officers equal status with the criminals they arrest.—*Daily Telegraph* (George Moor)

● The Prince will be treated as a National Health Service patient during his seven to 10 days in hospital.

In preparation for his arrival the leading Nottingham department store, Jessops, delivered a new three-piece suite, a desk, new curtains and a television.

And the Prince's personal chef will be constantly on hand "to minimise the confusion to the ordinary workings of the hospital", a hospital spokesman confirmed.—*Yorkshire Post* (Mrs A Marlow)

● King Hussein of Jordan went to one of our public schools and then to Sandhurst. Why then does he apparently not know right from wrong?—Letter in the *Evening Standard* (D Duggan)

FRINGE BENEFITS

Back pages

Colin Ward

The TV character with whom I identify totally is the old gent in the Yellow Pages ad. He rings around the secondhand bookshops for a work on fly-fishing by J R Hartley. Finally he locates a copy. Yes, he'll call and collect it instantly. And his name? Well, of course, it's J R Hartley.

You can laugh, but the second most common embarrassment for authors is to run out of copies of their own books. Everyone assumes that when all else fails, the writer of this elusive out-of-print book must have a secret hoard of copies. The other embarrassment is the opposite: to have the floorboards sagging under the weight of parcels of your own unsold works. There's nothing new about this. Henry David Thoreau was obliged by the terms of his contract to buy the unsold copies of the first of his books, and wrote in his journal, "I have a library of 900 volumes, over 700 of which I wrote myself."

It has happened to me twice. When Pearsons bought Penguin and closed its education section in 1974 there were some books which had gone too far through the printery to be stopped. As an alternative to pulping they gave the authors the chance to acquire as many copies as they wanted just for the carriage costs. "I'll have them all," I said, full of wounded pride. "There are rather a lot," warned Tony Lacey of Penguin. "So much the better," I replied, and I gave them in parcels of 44 to every school I visited. Today I only have two copies, but I actually see that book still in use, and I blush for the out-of-date illustrations.

The second time demonstrates the sheer perfidy of publishers. In breach of contract, a publisher remaindered a book of mine without giving me the chance to buy up the stock. A friend in the book trade bought the lot from the remainder house and I've slowly sold them ever since. The irony is that I'm now overtaken by a new reprint.

But the J R Hartley syndrome is much more familiar. Authors get six free copies and instantly give them away to the people who have helped them. When a book goes out of print, as mine usually do, every scholar from Syracuse to Sydney reckons that the author is the last resort for a loan of his or her copy. Never mind the airmail costs, if they're interested in what you've written about, how can you be churlish enough to resist?

This is why I know Mr Hartley's dilemma inside out. I was once talking at a meeting in Toynbee Hall, along with the poet and propagandist for the Yiddish language, Avram Stencl, editor of *Loshen un Leben*, which he used to thrust on people with a missionary glint in his eye. He read one of his poems and, sitting next to him on the platform, I couldn't help noticing the stamp on the back (or front in Yiddish) of his own book. It said Tower Hamlets Public Libraries. "Do you mean to say," I whispered, "that you don't have a copy of your own poems?" He smiled seraphically and replied, "No. Naturally, I gave them all away."

Unlike J R Hartley, Avram Stencl was innocent of the Yellow Pages, and would, I imagine, have felt affronted rather than pleased if a book of his turned up in the secondhand trade. How could the owner bear to dispose of it? All the same, the very week that someone wrote to me wanting the loan of an out-of-print and out-of-date book of mine of which I only possess one battered copy, I chanced to be in Carlisle. The new public library, which is sited, as they all ought to be, right in the middle of the city's new shopping centre, had a shelf of ex-library books for sale.

We all know that it's a pathetic gesture of public libraries these days to raise a little cash by selling off books which aren't borrowed very often. That's why I own a copy of the *Municipal Yearbook* for 1984. Sometimes they sell off standard works which should have been kept in the basement for posterity. It's a short-term asset-stripping policy of which no one who believes in libraries can approve. All the same, I bought there for 20p a copy this book of mine which my enquirer had been vainly seeking. She was delighted and I was flattered.

But the lessons of the Hartley ad for authors are to hang on relentlessly to just two copies of your own hard-won output. Forget about the Yellow Pages and refer all enquirers to the Inter-Library Loans service to which every public and educational library in the country belongs. Give it time and it will serve you marvellously.

Many years ago I saw a small ad in the personal column that said: "Good prices paid for any novels by Gerald Kersh in any condition." I chanced to have seen half a dozen in the sixpenny box outside our local junk shop. So I bought them and sent them off to the box number. Back came a generous cheque and a letter of thanks. You'll have guessed who signed it. Yes, of course, it was Gerald Kersh.

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Reel worlds

"'Alone in a crowd' is never so intense as at the movies." Ian Breakwell and Paul Hammond asked cinema-goers for their accounts of what happens when the lights go down. Here are some of their strange, but true, stories

Now the Bijou, the Globe, the Luxor, the Roxy and the Star are bingo palaces. Old ladies with thick stockings holding veins like knots of worms, and men whose eyes are duller than clay alleys dream other dreams and watch the numbered screen, killing time, hoping for a win. The Empire is a supermarket now, a freezer full of TV dinners where the Gents once stood.
Mike Harding

When we were 12 our aspiring sex lives were chronicled by seat location in the cinema. If you sat with a girl in rows A to F, you'd just met. F to M you were undoubtedly snogging (mouths closed). M to P was snogging (mouths open). While P to V meant access to the inside of a liberty bodice. I never could believe what they said happened in rows behind V.
Chris Proctor

NICOLE WARD JOUVE

The war was over. The family were staying with a friend of my grandmother's in La Ciotat, a small harbour town near Marseilles, our normal home. I remember a dark apartment, ships' masts, a smell of tar, iron and iodine, grown-ups. My father said, *"Je vais t'emmener au cinéma ce soir voir* La Ruée vers l'or." 'I am going to take you to the pictures tonight to see *The Gold Rush.*' I did not know what "*cinéma*" was, it was one of those wonderful and unimaginable pleasures like *La Semaine de Suzette* and its doll Bleuette, which the war had taken away. Grown-ups would evoke them discreetly, so as not to corrupt you with impossible desires. They would say, 'Before the war, there was. . .' My grandmother had a beautiful satin box with flowers painted on the cover. She hoarded ribbons in it. She said, "You see, before the war, this was given to me as a present, and it was full of chocolates." I could not imagine what they were, apart from an unattainable marvel, part of a world gone for ever. I thought that the ribbons were beautiful, all the colours of the bunch of flowers painted on the cover.

Now all these things were returning, one by one. Cinema was one of them.

We went late one evening. I remember dark streets, and walking hand in hand with my father. I had misunderstood the name of the film, and not dared ask too many questions. You were supposed to be bright if you took things in quickly. I liked to play at being bright. I had vaguely understood something about a press of people, and was surprised to see the streets so empty. I had heard, not *La Ruée vers l'or, "ruée"* being quite outside the bounds of my vocabulary, but *"La rue Everlor"*. Everlord, Everlaure, Héverlore, Aiverlaur? It would be foreign, magical. Each of the streets through which we went might have led to it. I remember I kept saying, "Is this it?" and my father said, "No, a bit further." I loved my father and he loved me. It was so intense and we were both so strung up, uneasy about it. But exalted. All this spare passion between us, which we did not know how to show. So we were exceedingly well behaved towards each other. I was promising myself to be very quiet, whatever it would be. He was coaxing me to walk a bit further without having to carry me, by promising that it was just a bit further. It was all part of the rue Everlor.

When he did say "*nous voilà*!" I just didn't get it. It was a house, a kind of shop with a rather dingy entrance. People were queuing to get in, but without ration stamps.

I never twigged what the gold rush was. It took me years to finally comprehend. But the house hanging over the cliff got me into agonies of suspense, and I was amazed, when the dark came without bombs, by how the black on the screen, especially the black of Charlie Chaplin's suit, his moustache, hat and rolling intense eyes, fitted the darkness of the little cinema. And how the white, the snow, the sheet that was the screen, *was* the light, and you forgot yourself when you were watching. The hunger that made Charlie, Charlot, chew the boiled slices of boot, moustache toing-and-froing under his nose, I understood as well or as little as the hunger of the grown-ups around me, my mother eating the woodworms along with the oats and the silence as everybody stopped to watch her. I was lucky, thin as a rail and never hungry.

ALAN GARNER

I was three years old. Nobody had told me what a cinema or a film was, and certainly nothing about the concept of animated cartoons; and I was taken into the largest enclosed space I'd ever seen, into a crowd of strangers, put on a seat, and the lights went out. Figures 15 feet high loomed over me. The film was *Snow White*; and I felt my sanity slipping until the moment when the queen metamorphosed into the witch. Then I screamed and screamed, and could not stop. My mother called an usherette to have me removed, and I was handed into strange-smelling arms behind a bright beam that dazzled me. The arms hugged my squirming form and carried me out, while my mother stayed to watch the rest of the film. But the exit was at the foot of the screen, and I was being borne up towards that great and drooling hag, away from safety, pinioned by someone I couldn't see, and the witch was laughing.

When we got home I was thrashed for making my mother "look a fool". The nightmares began and have haunted me ever since. The witch has my mother's face.

DENIS NORDEN

In the 1930s you learnt how to behave as a human being from movies. You learned how to smoke, how to hold a cigarette. I wanted to become a reporter because I lusted after a belted trenchcoat like the one Joel McCrea wore in Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent.* Girls kissed with their eyes closed

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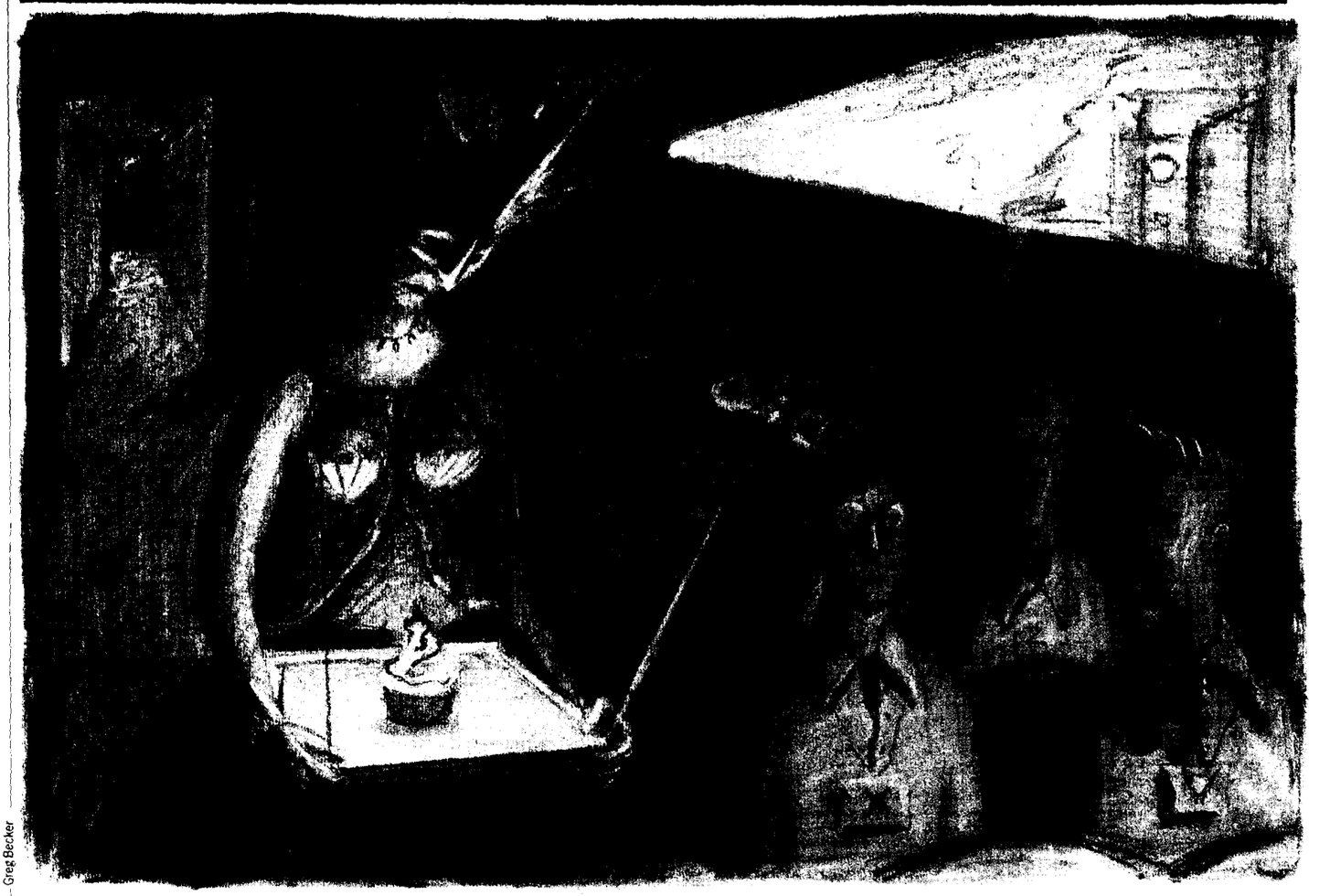

Greg Becker

and raising themselves up on tiptoe, because that was the cute shot in American movies. We believed in Hollywood. Cinemas themselves were special. Nobody had central heating, so it was warm. It was dark: "six penn'orth of dark" was what people were after. The cinema was our motel. And it was opulent in the way nothing else in your life was. They were called "picture palaces" for a very good reason. At the Empire, Leicester Square, the toilets were truly lavish: "I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls" had real meaning.

There were staff rackets. Teas were served in cinemas then. When you wanted tea you could either have a pot of tea, or a "cinema tea", which was a pot of tea and a plate on which was a sandwich with the crusts cut off, which also represented something, and a cake. It's very difficult to eat in the dark. We noticed that quite often if people ate the sandwich they left the cake, or vice versa, so when we used to collect the trays from them we would take whatever was left. At the back of the stalls there were radiators which had plush curtains and we would shove these cakes and sandwiches under the radiators, and the next time somebody ordered a "cinema tea" we would go to the kitchen and order a pot. Maybe the "cinema tea" was 9d and the pot of tea 6d. We'd then pull out a sandwich and a cake, put it on the tray: nobody could see what they were eating, and we'd pocket the difference. The stuff could have been under there for days, if not weeks.

I was at the Trocadero, Elephant and Castle, as an assistant manager, and there were 122 on the staff. It was military, everyone in uniform, and there was a staff parade. The manager would inspect the ranks. You had to stand with your hands held out, and he'd look at your nails. The public paid to see gleaming buttons, luxury. Everything had to preserve the illusion. For example, we were not allowed to show "white screen". When the curtains part and you see a white screen you know you're watching a screen and it isn't real. So projectionists had to put a colour tint on to the screen before the first frame hit. It was showmanship so that the illusion might have force, impact.

The Saturday morning club for kids was murder. I had to announce a big disaster during the war, the fall of France or something, and it was during a children's matinée. We had to tell them because they might have wanted to go home. It was Christmas time, and we used to give them oranges and sweets. This bad news had come through, and of course nobody had television then; not everybody had a radio. Maybe it was Narvik, although now I can't remember what Narvik was. The place was full: twelve hundred kids. So I said to the organist, whose name was Billy Page, "I'll come up on the organ." I announced: " We've had this bad news." And the kids all shouted, "Where's the fucking oranges! Where's the fucking oranges!"

At the Trocadero there were gangs. The tenement slums at Elephant and Castle have since disappeared. The gangs were called up during the war. But before that they used to raid. They'd try and "bump-in". One of them bought a ticket and he'd go to an exit, open the door and his mates would flood in. These gangs were thirty- and forty-strong, youths in long black overcoats and knotted scarves, like Sid Field. It was your job to chuck 'em out. There were pitched battles, so they lay in wait for you. I took over from a guy who went out the stage door and somebody said to him: "Have you got a light?" As he put his hand in his pocket he was grabbed from behind and they razored his face. I used to go back home via the local Underground and I'd take six of our Irish

Have you ever been the only punter in a big cinema? The film has been showing to an empty room. Now there is you. Eventually, guilty about being there, you leave. Does the film continue to the end?

Ian Walker

I worked in a Soho building which also housed a porn cinema. The manager told me of the things they found under the seats after shows, ranging from sticky handkerchiefs to old punters who had collapsed with heart attacks and the bruised and bloody corpse of a rabbit which had obviously been fucked to death. But, as he said, it was a very attractive rabbit, probably "asking for it".

Deborah Orr

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The manager was patrolling the aisles and found a pair of lady's panties on the floor by the back stalls. He picked them up and courteously enquired of the young woman sitting closest with her boyfriend if they were hers. With equal decorum she replied, "Oh no, mine are in my handbag."

Noel Spence

I introduced Alice Guy's 1913 silent film *A House Divided*. Halfway through the film broke, the houselights came up, and I was accosted by a wino. He insisted that the female lead had worked in Woolworth's in Plymouth and he retained an unrequited passion for her. He grabbed me by the throat and began throttling me, all the while demanding her address.

Judith Higginbottom

During a scene in W C Fields's *The Bank Dick* in which men were digging a trench in the road I became aware that my feet felt cold and wet. Looking down I saw they were in a puddle of water that hadn't been there at the start and seemed to be oozing out of the ground.

Ian Breakwell

I remember a cinema full of screaming kids giving the "fuck off" V sign to a newsreel of Winston Churchill giving his "victory" V sign. Later I understood why our national hero was so unpopular: he was the Tory minister who had called out the troops against the miners in the 1920s, an action much more pertinent in our mining town than the defeat of Hitler.

Michael O'Pray

doormen with me, all of them six foot three, and they'd take the rollers from the roller towels in the Gents and they'd stand around me, and we would go out in a "flying wedge". These were tough people. The gangs would want to watch the film, but occasionally also drag an usherette into the exit. They'd barricade themselves in. We had a couple of usherettes raped. We'd ring up the police, who would take a bunch of these youths into the same exit and do 'em over. At the Troc we had a list of troublemakers, plus police photographs, nicknames and descriptions, above the cashier's grille. There was one lady called "Toss-Off Kate" who used to go round the audience and sit beside various isolated gentlemen and ask them if they wanted to be serviced. What I liked about her was that she charged less in the 6ds than she did in the 1/3ds: she had a sliding scale.

On a Sunday night you used to show different films from the rest of the week. You'd show films that were old, even in those days. One Sunday at the Trocadero the chief circle usher said to me, "I think you'd better come up to the back circle, Gents, we've got a bloke behaving obscenely." So I went up and there was a bloke standing in the middle of the toilets, by the basin, tossing himself off, and I said, "What do you think you're doing?" He said, "I can't help it." We were showing a Jessie Matthews film called *Evergreen*, one of her first films, in which she wore long silk stockings. He said, "When I was a kid I saw that film, and wanked for days on end. And I've come back years later and it's had the same effect on me." The habit of going to see the movie—that sophisticated notion—no, people went to "the pictures", they didn't go to see such-and-such a film. "What are you doing Tuesday night?" "Going to the pictures."

JANICE EIDUS

Once upon a time, on an island called Manhattan, I went to see a film called *The Company of Wolves* and found myself in the company of a pack of real wolves.

When the British film *The Company of Wolves* (screenplayed by Angela Carter) was released a few years ago in New York City I was excited. I'm a big fan of Ms Carter's writing. And I'd read that it was a lyrical, erotic, feminist retelling of the fairy tale "Little Red Riding Hood". In other words, my kind of movie.

The Company of Wolves was playing in a movie house in Times Square. The kind that specialises in slash-and-gash horror films, and that caters to teenage boys who go to the movies to see virginal-looking, buxom, teenage girls on the screen being brutally raped, killed and dismembered.

The reason that *The Company of Wolves* wasn't being shown in a tiny art cinema where it would have gotten a devoted downtown audience dressed in black and carrying semiotics textbooks under their arms, was because it was being distributed in the States as a formulaic horror film. The distributor must have seen the word "wolves" in the title and leaped to the conclusion that it was a movie about horny young men turning into bloodthirsty werewolves.

Nevertheless, I went to the movie theatre in Times Square that Saturday night because I was determined to see what Angela Carter would do with our oh-so-precious fairy tale icon Little Red Riding Hood. When I arrived there were packs of teenage boys standing outside the theatre. They'd come not only from Manhattan but from all the boroughs. It was a melting-pot: tough-looking white boys in black leather jackets; tough-looking Hispanic boys in army fatigues; and tough-looking black boys in skin-tight, silver-coloured Lycra shorts. And they were all excited. In many cases, their excitement was drug induced. I was pretty sure of that. "Wolves!" they kept shouting to one another. "Man, I like wolf movies!" "Eat them bitches up," I heard one of the boys say to his friend, who nodded in ferocious agreement. "Dig their teeth," another said.

I tiptoed into the theatre, head down, trying not to look any more conspicuous than I already did as a solitary adult female, wearing a black jersey dress, dangling silver earrings, and bright red lipstick. I sat way in the back.

After about 15 minutes of coming attractions (all advertising movies in which blonde sorority girls are savagely murdered by hulking, psychotic-looking men) *The Company of Wolves* began. During the credits, the audience was so noisy, so excited, that I could hardly see the screen or hear what was going on. The boys were standing, throwing junk food at each other, yelling, threatening to turn the wolves on each other. They were ready for a good time.

Man, they knew what to expect, they knew the formula inside out. If someone turns into a wolf, the wolf is going to brutally dismember, and then devour, a young girl. And there will be blood. Lots and lots of bright red virgin blood. Still, virgin blood or not, the boys knew one other thing, too: if the girl was walking somewhere by herself where the wolf was free to get at her, then clearly she was asking for it and had gotten no more than she deserved. "Kill her ass!" the boys were shouting out to the screen. "Screw her buns off!" "Eat her titties!" "Destroy the mother!" By then, at least, nearly all of them had sat down, eager for the blood to start pouring on the screen.

But there was no dismemberment. No blood. What there was instead was a lyrical, dreamy sequence. The boys were growing confused. Their excited shouts turned into annoyed grumbling. This movie wasn't following the formula they knew and loved so well, the formula they had every reason to expect. After all, nobody had told them that this was really a postmodern, lyrical feminist film that should have been showing at the Film Forum or the Bleecker Street Cinema (theatres they'd undoubtedly never heard of). And if someone had told them, they still wouldn't have understood, or cared. "Postmodern" and "lyrical" were not words that would have had much meaning to them. "Feminist" might have, although it probably would have evoked the image of some short-haired "dyke" whom they would have been more than thrilled to brutally dismember, themselves, *gratis*, you name the time and place, they'll be there.

Well, after a few more lush lyrical sequences, the boys had had enough. They were good sports, sure, but life was just too short for them to have to endure an evening like this. They stood up. They began shouting and stomping their feet. There were shouts, curses and threats. "Fuck this motherfucking bullshit jive-ass movie!" was a line I kept hearing. "These fucking assholes better give me back my fucking money!" and "This ain't no wolf movie!" were two others. My favourite, though, was "Your momma eats wolves' titties!"

Unless the boys got back their motherfucking money it was clear, at least to me, exactly what was going to occur: a bona fide riot. I tiptoed out to the lobby, where I saw the terrified-looking ticket-takers wildly handing out five- and ten-dollar bills, whatever denomination they could lay their hands on, in order to appease and quiet the boys. Feeling slightly reassured that a real riot wasn't going to erupt, I tiptoed back to my seat. And, throughout all of this, none of the boys in the audience ever spoke to me, or even seemed to look at me. My presence in the theatre must have been so impossible for them to imagine that I was rendered invisible.

When I look back at that Saturday night I understand that I had witnessed something magnificent: a fairy tale gone completely awry, an audience that had transformed itself into its very own horror movie, its very own company of wolves.

This is an extract from Seeing in the dark: a compendium of cinema-going, *edited by Ian Breakwell and Paul Hammond, published this month by Serpent's Tail at £10.99.*

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READER SURVEY

This is our first readership survey for two years. We have made great changes in that time. We are now conducting a thorough review of our plans for the magazine and we want your views. This is your chance to tell us what you like, what you want, and what we can do to improve the magazine. We also need to find out who you are for potential advertisers. Their revenue is needed to strengthen and improve the magazine.

We would be enormously grateful if you could spare the time to complete this questionnaire and return it to us at the address below. To encourage you, we're offering prizes of three cases of wines, six annual subscriptions to *NSS* and six copies of the *New Statesman* anthology, *Lines of Dissent.*

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Please tick if you are willing to participate in further research ☐

Please return form to:

New Statesman & Society, FREEPOST, London E2 8BR (no stamp in the UK)

1. How often do you read New Statesman & Society?

- At least three in every four weeks ☐ 1
- Every other week or so ☐ 2
- About once a month ☐ 3
- Less often ☐ 4

2. How did you get this copy of New Statesman & Society?

- By subscription through the post ☐ 1
- On order from your newsagent ☐ 2
- From your newsagent, but not on firm order ☐ 3
- From a library ☐ 4
- It's an office copy ☐ 5
- It is someone else's copy ☐ 6

3. If you buy it occasionally were you prompted by:

- The cover ☐ 1
- Particular feature ☐ 2
- Something else (please specify) ☐ 3

.....

4. What do you most want from the magazine? (Please rank in order)

1. Left political point of view .....
2. Coverage of social issues .....
3. To know what is going on .....
4. Cultural and sexual politics .....
5. Fine writing .....
6. Challenging new ideas .....
7. Investigative and factual reporting ....
8. Other (please specify) .....

.....

5. How many people read your copy of the magazine each week?

- Only myself ☐ 1
- Myself plus

1 other	2 others	3-4 others	5-6 others	More than 6 others
☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6

6. How long do you spend reading your copy of the magazine?

- Less than 2 hours ☐ 1
- 2-4 hours ☐ 2
- More than 4 hours ☐ 3

7. How old are you?

15-24	☐ 1	25-34	☐ 2
35-44	☐ 3	45-54	☐ 4
55-66	☐ 5	65+	☐ 6

8. What sex are you?

Male ☐ 1 Female ☐ 2

9. Are you?

Single ☐ 1 Married/cohabiting ☐ 2

10. What is your ethnic origin?

European	☐ 1	Afro-caribbean	☐ 2
Asian	☐ 3	Other	☐ 4

12. Which of the following are you?

- House/Flat owner ☐ 1
- Council tenant ☐ 2
- Private tenant ☐ 3
- Housing association tenant ☐ 4
- In short-life housing ☐ 5

13. Are you?

- In paid employment ☐ 1
- In your own business ☐ 2
- Self-employed ☐ 3
- Unemployed ☐ 4
- Housewife/househusband ☐ 5
- Student ☐ 6
- Retired ☐ 7

15. In which sector do you work?

- Private ☐ 1
- Public ☐ 2
- Voluntary ☐ 3

16. If public, which of the following?

- Higher education ☐ 1
- Schools ☐ 2
- National government ☐ 3
- Local government administration ☐ 4
- Environmental services ☐ 5
- Health ☐ 6
- Housing ☐ 7
- Social services ☐ 8
- Arts organisation ☐ 9
- Other (please specify) ☐ 10

.....

17. If private, which of the following?

- Advertising, marketing, public relations ☐ 1
- Press ☐ 2
- Television and radio ☐ 3
- Computing ☐ 4
- A profession (eg., Law, Accountancy-state which) ☐ 5

.....

- Finance/Investment ☐ 6
- Engineering ☐ 7
- Construction ☐ 8
- Transport and distribution ☐ 9
- Services ☐ 10
- Other (please specify) ☐ 11

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18. If voluntary, which of the following?

- Trade union ☐ 1
- Self-help group ☐ 2
- Campaigning or lobbying organisation ☐ 3
- Other (please specify) ☐ 4

.....

19. How would you categorise your present position?

- Owner/Chief Executive/MD ☐ 1
- Director ☐ 2
- Senior/Departmental manager ☐ 3
- Middle management ☐ 4
- Clerical/administrative ☐ 5
- Financial management ☐ 6
- Policy/research ☐ 7
- Professional (i.e. doctor, lawyer, teacher) ☐ 8
- Other (please specify) ☐ 9

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20. What is your gross annual income ?

- less than £10,000 ☐ 1
- £10,001-15,000 ☐ 2
- £15,001-20,000 ☐ 3
- £20,001-30,000 ☐ 4
- £30,001-40,000 ☐ 5
- more than £40,000 ☐ 6

21. Do you have any of the following credit cards?

- American Express ☐ 1
- Diners Club ☐ 2
- Visa ☐ 3
- Access ☐ 4
- Store cards (i.e. Marks & Spencer etc) ☐ 5
- Other (please specify) ☐ 6

.....

22. Do you have any of the following?

- Stocks and Shares ☐ 1
- Unit Trusts ☐ 2
- Life Assurance Policy ☐ 3
- Building Society Account ☐ 4
- Bank Deposit Account ☐ 5
- Cheque Book ☐ 6
- Personal Pension ☐ 7

24. If you are an investor, have you put money into ethical investment funds?

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

25. Which is your highest educational qualification?

- GCE O' Level/GCSE or equivalent ☐ 1
- GCE A' Level or equivalent ☐ 2
- HNC/HND ☐ 3
- Degree ☐ 4
- Masters ☐ 5
- PhD ☐ 6
- Other ☐ 7

26. (Graduates) In what study discipline is your first degree?

- Arts ☐ 1
- Humanities ☐ 2
- Political Sciences ☐ 3
- Natural Sciences ☐ 4
- Social Sciences ☐ 5
- Economics/Business Studies ☐ 6
- other ☐ 7

27. Are you interested in attending any of the following?

- Adult education ☐ 1
- A further degree course ☐ 2
- Job-related training courses ☐ 3
- Extra mural studies

28. If employed, how often do you change your job?

Every two years or less ☐ 1 Every 3-5 years ☐ 2
Every 5-10 years ☐ 3 Hardly ever ☐ 4

29. Are you a member of the following?

- Labour Party ☐ 1
- Liberal Democrats ☐ 2
- SDP ☐ 3
- Plaid Cymru ☐ 4
- Scottish Nationalist Party ☐ 5
- Green Party ☐ 6
- Conservative Party ☐ 7
- Trade Union ☐ 8
- Campaigning Pressure Group ☐ 9
- Charity/Voluntary Organisation ☐ 10
- Other ☐ 11
- None ☐ 12

30. If there were a general election tomorrow who would you vote for?

- Labour Party ☐ 1
- Liberal Democrats ☐ 2
- Conservative Party ☐ 3
- Green Party ☐ 4
- Nationalist ☐ 5
- Other ☐ 6
- None/undecided ☐ 7

31. Are you active in any of the following?

- Local politics ☐ 1
- Trade union ☐ 2
- Campaigning and pressure groups ☐ 3
- Charity work ☐ 4

32. Which of these things have you done over the last three years?

- Voted in national/local elections ☐ 1
- Taken part in a political or TU campaign ☐ 2
- Presented your views to your councillor or MP ☐ 3
- Written a letter to an editor ☐ 4
- Been elected an officer of an organisation ☐ 5
- Stood for public office ☐ 6

Please state your opinion of the following

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Dis-agree	Strong-ly dis agree
33. Labour is now a credible progressive force in UK politics	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
34. The Green Party is setting the new political agenda	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
35. Labour's policies and politics are bland and uninspiring	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
36. Above all Britain needs to make its constitution fully democratic	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
37. Britain's future lies in a federal Europe	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
38. NSS is unconstructively critical of Labour	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
39. NSS addresses the major political issues of the day	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
39a. There's too much coverage of sexual matters in the magazine	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
39b. NSS continues to give serious attention to social policy	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
39c. Factual investigative pieces should be given greater prominence	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
39d. NSS doesn't give enough space to popular culture	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
39e. The books pages cover too limited a range of books	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
39f. NSS gives me a good read	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
39g. NSS needs to be more lighthearted	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
39h. I would like to read more interviews in NSS	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
39i. There should be more think-pieces in NSS	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
39j. I would like to read more short articles in NSS	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
39l. There are too many signed columns in NSS	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
39m. NSS needs more New Society reportage pieces	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

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Please show what you think of each of the following parts of the contents of *New Statesman & Society* by ticking the appropriate box:

	Essential reading	Usually worth reading	Sometimes worth reading	Not usually worth reading
40. Editorials	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
41. Cover stories	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
42. Foreign coverage	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
43. Reportage	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
44. Short story	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
45. Books	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
46. Weekend comp	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
Articles by:				
47. Duncan Campbell	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
48. Alexander Cockburn	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
49. Stuart Cosgrove	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
50. Maria Manning	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
51. David Marquand	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
52. Jeremy Seabrook	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
53. Marina Warner	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
54. Steve Bell	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
Columnists:				
55. Sean French	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
56. Jolyon Jenkins	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
57. R W Johnson	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
58. Suzanne Moore	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
59. Paul Morley	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
60. Colin Ward	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4

How interested are you in coverage on the following issues in the magazine: (1-very, 2-fairly, 3-uninterested)

62. Civil liberties	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
63. Race	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
64. Sexual politics	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
65. Europe	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
67. Third World	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
68. Finance/economics	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
69. Environment	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
70. Food	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
71. Science and technology	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
72. Sport	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
73. Media	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
75. Health	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
76. Cultural politics	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
79. Books	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
80. Television	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
82. Films	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
85. Music	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
89. Other (please specify)	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

.....

Which of the following newspapers do you (A) read regularly and (B) consult for job vacancies ?

	90. (A)	(B) 91.
The Times	☐ 1	☐ 1
Guardian	☐ 2	☐ 2
The Independent	☐ 3	☐ 3
Daily Telegraph	☐ 4	☐ 4
Financial Times	☐ 5	☐ 5
Daily Mirror	☐ 6	☐ 6
Sunday Times	☐ 7	☐ 7
Observer	☐ 8	☐ 8
Sunday Telegraph	☐ 9	☐ 9
Independent on Sunday	☐ 10	
Sunday Correspondent	☐ 11	☐ 11
Other (please specify)	☐ 12	☐ 12
.....		
None	☐ 13	☐ 13

Which of the following magazines do you (A) read regularly and (B) consult for job vacancies?

	92. (A)	(B) 93.
Punch	☐ 1	☐ 2
The Economist	☐ 1	☐ 2
The Listener	☐ 1	☐ 2
Marxism Today	☐ 1	☐ 2
Times Literary Supp.	☐ 1	☐ 2
Times Educational Supp.	☐ 1	☐ 2
Private Eye	☐ 1	☐ 2
New Scientist	☐ 1	☐ 2
GQ	☐ 1	☐ 2
The Face	☐ 1	☐ 2
New Socialist	☐ 1	☐ 2
Social Work Today	☐ 1	☐ 2
Spare Rib	☐ 1	☐ 2
Time Out	☐ 1	☐ 2
Spectator	☐ 1	☐ 2
City Limits	☐ 1	☐ 2
Local Government	☐ 1	☐ 2
Community Care	☐ 1	☐ 2
Chronicle	☐ 1	☐ 2
Marie Claire	☐ 1	☐ 2
London Review of Books	☐ 1	☐ 2
Q	☐ 1	☐ 2

About how many books, for work or leisure, have you bought over the last six months?

	94. Hardback	Paperback 95.
None	☐ 1	☐ 1
1-5	☐ 2	☐ 2
6-10	☐ 3	☐ 3
11-20	☐ 4	☐ 4
More than 20	☐ 5	☐ 5

96. Which types of book do you mainly buy?

History	☐ 1
Biography/autobiography	☐ 2
Politics/current affairs	☐ 3
Cultural	☐ 4
Other non-fiction	☐ 5
Fiction	☐ 6

97. Are you influenced in your choice of books by reviews in *New Statesman & Society?*

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

On average how often do you?

	More than twice a month	Once or twice a month	6+ times a year	1-6 times a year	Never
98. Visit a cinema	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
99. Go to the theatre	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
100. Go to the opera	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
101. Go to the ballet	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
102. Listen to live classical music	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
103. Listen to live jazz	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
104. Listen to live popular music	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
105. Eat out in a restaurant	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
106. Visit an art gallery	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
107. Attend a political demonstration/ meeting	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

108. Are you influenced on your choice of an evening out by reviews in *New Statesman & Society?*

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

109.Do you have in your home any of the following?

A radio	☐ 1
A television	☐ 2
A video	☐ 3
A stereo	☐ 4
An audio tape deck	☐ 5
A home computer	☐ 6
A camera	☐ 7
A compact disc player	☐ 8
A personal stereo	☐ 9
An electronic organiser	☐10

On average, how many CDs, tapes, LPs of the following have you bought in the last 6 months?

	None	1-5	+5-10	10+
110. Classical	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
111. Popular	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4

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112. Jazz	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
113. World	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
114. Opera	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
115. Dance	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
116. Other	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4

How many videos have you bought in the last 6 months?

	None	1-5	5-10	10+
117. Film	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
118. Music	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
119. Documentary	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
120. Recreation/ special interest	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4

122. Please number your preference in TV programmes.

1. Sport .....
2. Multi Cultural .....
3. Documentaries/Education .....
4. Arts & Music .....
5. News & Current Affairs .....
6. Light Entertainment .....
7. Drama Series .....
8. Science & Natural History .....

123. Please number your preference in radio programmes.

1. Music .....
2. News/Current Affairs .....
3. Drama/Art .....
4. Documentaries/Education .....
5. Light entertainment/Soaps .....
6. Sport .....

How often do you consume

	more than once a week	about once a week	less than once a week but at least once a month	never
124. Wine	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
125. White spirits	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
126. Brown spirits	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
127. Blended whisky	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
128. Single malt whisky	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
129. Vermouth	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
130. Sherry	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
131. Port	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
132. Bottled lager	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
133. Canned lager	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
134. Draught lager	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
135. Draught bitter	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
136. Mineral water	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4

137. Do you smoke?

- Cigarettes ☐ 1
- Cigars ☐ 2
- A pipe ☐ 3
- Hand rolled cigarettes ☐ 4
- Non smoker ☐ 5

138. Where do you consume alcohol most frequently?

In pubs	☐ 1	In wine bars	☐ 2
In restaurants	☐ 3	At home	☐ 4

Do you buy your (A) wine (B) spirits in

	139 (A)	(B) 139a
A supermarket	☐ 1	☐ 1
A wine merchant	☐ 2	☐ 2
Your local off licence	☐ 3	☐ 3

140. Are you influenced by environmental factors when purchasing

- A car ☐ 1
- Food ☐ 2
- Domestic product ☐ 3

141. How many holidays have you taken in the last 12 months?

Three or more	☐ 1	Two	☐ 2
One	☐ 3	None	☐ 4

142. Where?

- England ☐ 1
- Ireland ☐ 2
- Scotland ☐ 3
- Wales ☐ 4
- Europe ..... Please specify country ☐ 5
- Asia ☐ 6
- Africa ☐ 7
- Australia/New Zealand ☐ 8
- N. America ☐ 9
- Latin America ☐ 10

143. Were any of these holidays?

Packages	☐ 1	Special interests	☐ 2
Study Holidays	☐ 3	None of above	☐ 4

144. How many times have you travelled abroad on business in the last 12 months?

Three times or more	☐ 1	Twice	☐ 2
Once	☐ 3	None	☐ 4

146. How often do you spend a weekend away in a hotel or guest house?

12 times a year	☐ 1	6 times a year	☐ 2
3 times a year	☐ 3	Less often	☐ 4

148. Do you own any of the following?

- Car ☐ 1
- Motorbike ☐ 2
- Bicycle ☐ 3

149. How often do you replace your car?

Less than 3 years	☐ 1	Every 3 years	☐ 2
Every 4-6 years	☐ 3	Never	☐ 4

150. How much did you pay for your current car?

- Up to £1000 ☐ 1
- £1000-£5000 ☐ 2
- £5001-£10,000 ☐ 3
- £10,001 or more ☐ 4

151. What make of car do you drive?

.....

152. How much do you spend per year on art and crafts (including prints, ceramics, textiles, antiques etc.)?

- Very little ☐ 1
- Up to £100 ☐ 2
- £100-£500 ☐ 3
- £501-£1000 ☐ 4
- £1000 or more ☐ 5

153. During the last 12 months have you donated by post to charities working on behalf on any of the following?

- Medical research ☐ 1
- Arts organisations ☐ 2
- Children ☐ 3
- Disabled group ☐ 4
- The elderly ☐ 5
- Overseas development ☐ 6
- Others (please specify) ☐ 7

154. Please tick below if you have looked at our classified ads for any of the following?

- Jobs ☐ 1
- Courses ☐ 2
- Meetings ☐ 3
- Personal/lineage ☐ 4

155. How often do you look at the classified section?

- At least 3 in every four weeks ☐ 1
- Every other week or so ☐ 2
- About once a month ☐ 3
- Less often ☐ 4

156. Have you ever considered working for a charity?

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

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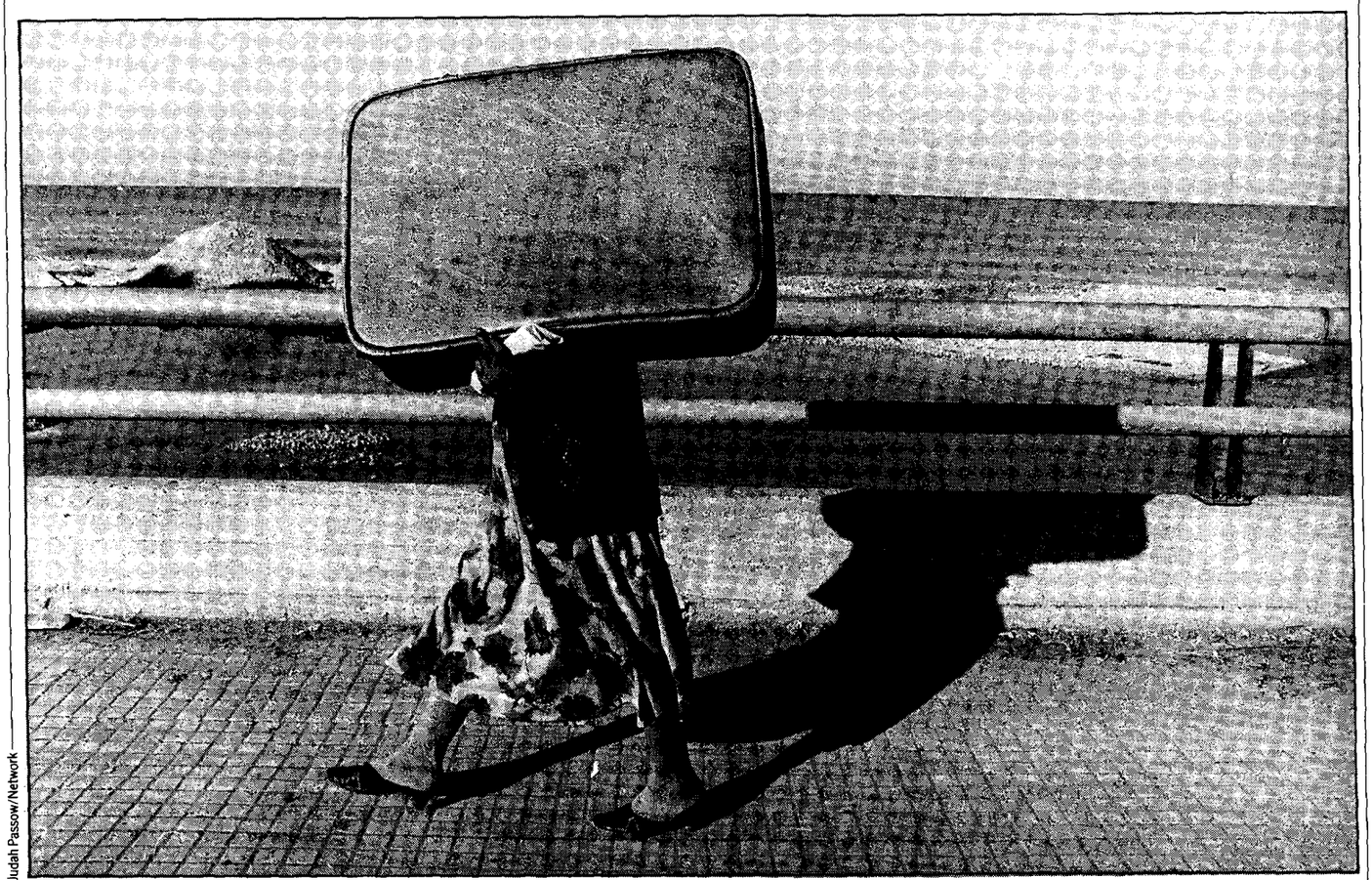

Judah Passow/Network

"Suitcases filled with stones, and unopened packages that had been mailed to western capitals were used to evoke an experience of displacement."

Arabesque

Edward Said has written several books on Arab politics and culture. In New York he talked to Edward Ball about the threat of war in the Middle East, its impact on the cultures there and about the role the US media are playing in the current crisis

The US military build-up in the Middle East, quite apart from the possibility of war it encourages, hands Anglo-Americans an opportunity to educate themselves about the culture and politics of Arab societies, something they've failed to do during the many previous crises. What do you see as the key moment of cultural life in the Arab world?

The most important aspect of contemporary Arab political and intellectual culture is the absence of democracy. In every country, almost without exception, people can't say what they want to say. People in universities can't do the research they want, or engage in the kinds of discussions they want.

Lebanon used to be the exception, but that, too, is gone. There are very severe limits on cultural life, and it's difficult for us in the United States and elsewhere to understand, because things are so fraught with secret services, informers, and one form or another of bullying and intimidation. In a sense, culture in Arab societies becomes an extension of politics. It's impossible to imagine anyone writing autonomously: it's always in some way political and, some would say, ideological.

How does this affect cultural products, like literature?

In the case of Lebanon, one problem writers deal with is how to devise a style and form to deal with a constantly changing reality. Among Palestinians, the sense of urgency and threat, of insecurity, of perpetual self-consciousness, has marked the entire literature and culture. If you read Palestinian writers, like Ghassan Kanafani (whose novel *Men in the Sun* is in translation), or the poet Mahmoud Darwish, this feeling of insecurity is clearly obsessive.

How close are intellectuals in Arab societies to political decision making?

To schematise in a coarse way, there are the intellectuals of parties, governments, institutions; then there are the intellectuals who are largely oppositional. Sometimes opposition equals Marxism; sometimes it equals Islam, where that poses a challenge. It's difficult to find an intellectual who is considered to be merely a scholar, because everyone is associated with some tendency, some faction, some ideological or political line. In all Arab countries, academic appointments are political appointments: you have to be cleared. The basic distinction is whether you are with the dominant regime, or not. So all intellectuals are political, willy-nilly.

In fact, what we are talking about in the Arab world is the absence of civil society. You have highly politicised societies in what are essentially national security states. Plus, every Arab in one way or another feels threatened by some outside force: whether it's Israel, or another Arab state, or the Americans. If you are in opposition, you might publish samizdat stuff, or

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go into exile.

There is a large exile literature, especially since the destruction of Beirut. Beirut used to be a place where expatriates from the Arab world could find a place. Now, there isn't a city like that, and in the last ten years expatriates have tended to go to Europe. Arab intellectual life goes forward in places like London and Paris, where people in exile produce oppositional magazines; and, interestingly, the home regimes also publish periodicals. There are Saudi papers in London and Iraqi-backed newspapers in Paris. Places outside the Arab world have become very important because of the unique phenomenon of tremendous dislocation.

Is literary culture in a place like Iraq fairly well mobilised around the state?

I've never been to Iraq, but my impression is, yes. Which isn't to say, by the way, that there is not interesting stuff done in Iraq. The arts of poetry are fantastically developed in Iraq. The work is not astonishing in itself, but it is in relation to what one assumes to be the political atmosphere, which is pretty repressive.

I saw some interesting Iraqi art this year at the Venice Biennial. The officially chosen Iraqi artist for the exhibition, Fadhil Ukrufi, used such things as suitcases filled with stones, and unopened packages that had been mailed to western capitals, to evoke an experience of displacement. It backs up your theory about the importance of exile.

The central art in the Arab world is, of course, the verbal art. The plastic and visual arts have been basically ornamental, the so-called arabesque. But in Iraq the difference is stunning. Most of the great visual artists in the Arab world are from Iraq.

Most of these countries are highly politicised and have recently acquired independence. But the American attitude has been that if there is a vital interest, invade

Have the US media been as well informed about Arab culture and history as they should be?

Oh, no. With one Middle Eastern crisis after another, the media have had so many opportunities to educate themselves; but they haven't. The organisation of views follows a very coarse political and ideological distinction, on the one hand, between "us" and "them", and on the other, between "our friends" and "the terrorists". That's about it. One doesn't get a sense that there are different societies, different histories, different claims and aspirations. The prevailing sense in the US press is that the Arab world, as a place, is quite empty, a desert with a large pool of oil underneath it, with a bunch of camel drivers running around above, and this kind of madman, Saddam, at the top in Baghdad, whatever Baghdad is.

From what I read, it seems to be a sand-blown, adobe-hut carpet market.

The irony is that Baghdad was designed in the 8th century as a work of art in itself. The city has importance as the old capital of the Ambassid caliphate, the most splendid in the history of the Arabs.

Who are the worst offenders in terms of ethnocentric reporting?

I haven't made a study of it, but the television discussion programmes nearly always invite retired generals and secretaries of state, and former national security advisers. All of them, more or less, say, "We can go to war." What's lacking are what you might call Arab points of view, which would have to be diverse. But I don't even know if any of the American reporters know Arabic.

Are the US media being complicitous?

Not only complicitous, war-mongering. They are in advance of the government in that respect. It's only now, four weeks into the deployment of troops, that alternative voices are being heard, after 100,000 soldiers have already gone. But in the present climate, if you say anything that appears to question the deployment, you are called...

...pacifist.

Worse, you are put in the position of being a defender of Saddam Hussein. I've long believed that Saddam Hussein is an appalling and dreadful despot. I've refused several invitations to go to Iraq, and have never been there. I will have nothing to do with him. But on the other hand the idea of a warring Arab world seems horrible to me. Bad enough that Kuwait and Kuwaiti society seem to have been destroyed. But still, there are other questions to be asked. To pose them in the present context, which is so confining, is impossible. You are seen either as a loyal American, or some kind of terrorist.

To what extent do you believe the current situation in the Middle East is the fruit of imperialism, specifically US imperialism?

American interventionist policies have played a very important role. I've been working on a book called *Culture and Imperialism* which argues that the tactics of the great empires, which were dismantled after the first world war, are being replicated by the US, the main difference being that we are no longer dealing with an inert colonial world. Most of these countries are highly politicised and have recently acquired independence. But the American attitude has been that if there is a vital interest, invade. I am very hard put to describe the current conflict as anything but an imperialist issue. The American way of life is thought to be at stake.

The American way of driving.

There is a sense that the consumer has to be defended, no matter how far away the natural resources are.

My first instinct is to agree: yes, what are called the international oil interests play a powerful role. My second instinct is to say no, I'm tired of hearing the imperialist account of what appear to be local quarrels. At what point do Kuwait and Iraq become responsible for their predicament?

I'm willing to say, right away. But the US government didn't say that. It said, "We are responsible, and we have to go in there and fix it."

Mission impossible

Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz *condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait early on. As the Arab world's best known writer he uses his columns in the* Al-Ahram *daily newspaper to rally Arabs around a common heritage for a common cause—a peaceful solution to the Middle East crisis acceptable to all Arabs. Below we reprint his most recent columns*

When will the Arabs arrive at their age of reason? When will they begin to master their feelings, or their divisions? When will they, in these savage and merciless times, let emotion be led by intellect?

They seem to swing between two extremes. Their dialogue takes the form of courtship more suitable for lovers, or a barrage of insults more commonly found between feuding enemies.

We demand of no one that he abandon his interests. Nor would we wish to suppress opinions different from our own. But we have become utterly convinced of the necessity of harmony and cooperation, of a unity of vision and aim. Our minds and hearts are turned to one single path, founded on an economic, cultural and spiritual maturity. Our sincere resolution is to embrace the age we live in, to share in its gifts, while retaining the lasting spiritual values of our glorious heritage. And we must realise our aims in a way worthy of the cultural—and humanitarian—achievements of our past.

Within such an ambience of friendship, hope and aspiration, we must formulate policies for cooperation and support. When there is disagreement we must adhere to guidelines and ground-rules. The motives for cooperation are more important and greater than the grounds for difference; greater and more important than any conflict of interests are the reasons for rapprochement.

If a serious disagreement should arise, then let us appeal to reason and dialogue. And if that is not enough, then let us resort to a mediator from one of our sister-states; and if he cannot be found, then let arbitration rest with the Arab League as a whole. When there is sufficient desire for reconciliation, there can be no end to efforts to secure it—especially if we remember the hopes uniting us, the greater goals awaiting us. Beware of precipitate anger, heedless pride, blind agitation. There is a greater struggle in hand; that against the troublemaker within ourselves.

Al-Ahram, 16 August 1990.

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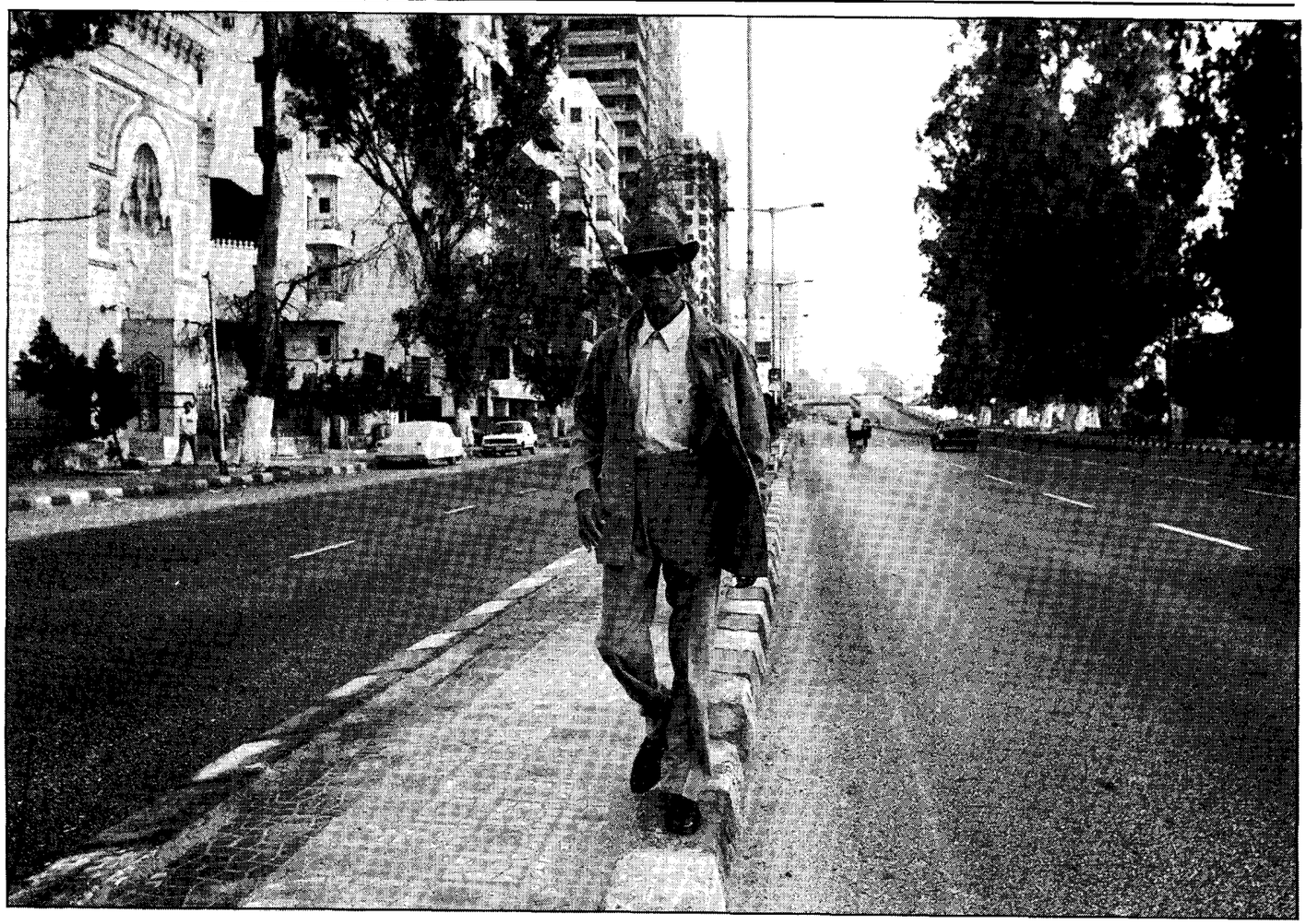

Naguib Mahfouz photographed by Ingeborg Lippman

On this day every year we commemorate the death of our two great national leaders, Saad Zaghlul and Mustafa Nahhas. Once more we call to mind the memories—seldom wholly absent—of our great national revolution of 1919. They are redolent still of that bloody battle for independence and democracy, for the legitimate aspirations of the time, for progress under the banner of national unity. This has led me to compare the past and the present, and to call to mind—as I should—the independence we gained, and the social justice we achieved, through the second revolution of July 1952. And I think also of the democracy we practise now, and hope that it will develop fully—just as, when I think of the many complex concerns and daily struggles of our nation, I hope that we will be rid of them as we have been rid in the past of colonialism, absolute monarchy, and other forces of oppression and reactionism.

We must also bear in mind—and indeed rejoice—that the memory of the 1919 revolution is this year truly revived. The same principles of modernism and freedom are advancing across a world which is dancing for joy at their arrival. And among the first to welcome the new spirit are those who until recently were the most obdurate and hostile of enemies. A new age is spreading its glad tidings; and as they spread, so will a lasting entente between civilisations and cultures. We hope this new understanding will bring forth a new humanism, one worthier of man—and more merciful to him.

I imagined, once, that the July revolution could not have brought about justice except by suppressing, even if only for a short while, the spirit of the mother-revolution of 1919. Hard lessons have taught me that a revolution cannot proceed without the support and commendation of the people. So did our revolution return to the democratic ideal which has today become its firm foundation—and its goal for the future.

Today we salute the two leaders. We salute the ongoing revolution, whose benefits are being received by the world, whose dreams the world hopes to realise. Let it reward the steadfast.

Al-Ahram, 23 August 1990.

In the adversities of the current Arab crisis, President Hosni Mubarak has reached that peak of civilised wisdom which befits the true Egyptian leader, aided by God in sound judgment and good health. It is he most of all who has given expression to the voice of Egypt, to its civilisation and deep-rooted values, since the dawn of conscience first broke over this blessed land, and good was distinguished from evil, and just recompense was laid down for this world and the next.

We have been gladdened by his persistent efforts to find a peaceful solution and to protect the Arab community from the disasters of war. We wish him success, as we do all those, Arab and non-Arab, who support him. But we will not be glad of a peace if it comes—God forbid—at the expense of certain values: and thus our first goal must be to remove all trace of aggression. Kuwait must regain its legal and territorial status; Iraq must return within the bounds of the rule of law, and once more respect human rights under the auspices of the Arab League and the United Nations.

We might properly acknowledge at this point that the effects of the crisis have not proved wholly evil. It has uncovered truths about our Arab brothers—truths which had to come to light before clear and unambiguous relations could be established between them. If they agree philosophically on the further aims of liberation and resurgence, they disagree over the means to them. There are some who insist upon the purity of end and means; and others who believe that the end justifies the means.

We must count ourselves among the first group, in order with them to establish a moral foundation for Arabism; and we must try by a variety of legitimate methods to purge the latter persuasion of the ideas of centuries past.

And urgently we ask: When will we emerge from the darkness of this crisis? When will we continue once more on the journey? When will we apply ourselves to the real goal, which is to play a role worthy, in these times, of ourselves?

Al-Ahram, 27 August 1990.

Translation by Frances Liardet.

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Film

The struggle for safe endings

Suzanne Moore on Hollywood's attempt to come to terms with Aids

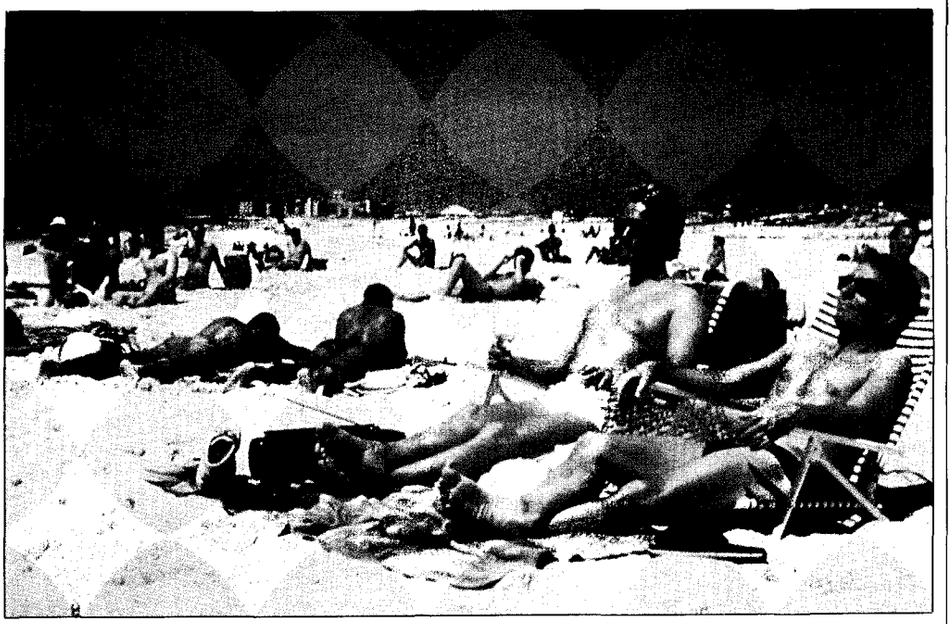
Recently, when speaking about the effects of the Aids epidemic, Derek Jarman used the analogy of the first world war's lost generation of young men. In the US such metaphors have already become reality. More Americans have died of Aids than died in Vietnam. As Michael Bronski has said, "There is no need—as they used to say—to bring the war home: it is already here." Yet, in the absence of a governmental response to the crisis (Reagan couldn't bring himself to say the word Aids until 1985), the most political response has come from cultural quarters. The day-to-day work of informing, counselling and caring taken on by the gay community has been inextricably bound to an activist cultural politics manifested in organisations such as ACTUP and Out Rage.

Documentation of the struggle simply to put Aids on the public agenda has often been like reportage from a battlefield, moving in its urgency, its need to tell it as it happens. London's Institute of Contemporary Arts is currently showing its latest collection of tapes by Aids activists Voices from the Frontlines—more war analogies. Often shot quickly and cheaply on video, the raw material of these films has been strikingly overlaid with a sophisticated understanding of how media imagery works. Many of these film-makers haven't learnt about "the politics of representation" in a seminar room, but organically, in the actual process of trying to represent their politics.

A decade into the crisis comes a couple of more mainstream efforts—**Longtime Companion**, billed as "Hollywood's first feature film to tell the historical story of how Aids devastates and how it has transformed the gay community", and the documentary **Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt.**

Longtime Companion is aiming for a wide audience, with its profits going to various Aids organisations. Indeed, it owes far more to the conventions of the Hollywood liberal *Angst* movie than to the more vibrant work that has emerged in response to the epidemic. Undoubtedly well intentioned, at least it escapes the trap of portraying Aids solely as an individual tragedy, while capturing the changing relations of the gay community.

Charting the lives of a number of white, affluent gay men, the film picks up their various stories each year from 1981 to the present day.



Hedonism rules on the beach at Fire Island at the start of "Longtime Companion"

Starting on the beach at Fire Island, where hedonism rules, it seems nothing could go wrong. Rumours of a strange cancer found increasingly in gay men are laughed off. Suggestions that it is linked to the use of "poppers" or other drugs mean that it can be dismissed by many. These characters don't do that many drugs, they don't sleep around that much.

A year later, of course, the disease has already entered their lives. *Longtime Companion* is good on all the denial mechanisms that come into play around Aids, one character explaining that only self-destructive people get it and that the answer is to think positively. A film like this, however, can only really work if one cares about the individual characters, and Fuzzy, Howard, Bob, David, Paul, Sean, John and the token woman Lisa, are so undifferentiated that it's difficult to do so. They are all so unremittingly "nice", all have stable monogamous relationships and, as the years go by, are so endlessly supportive that it doesn't ring true.

Sure enough there is a gradual politicisation but it's all very *thirtysomething*. Indeed, the classy soap feel is built into the film which, after all, contains the basic elements for a soap—"a closed community in crisis". Of course the gay community, like any other, is never closed in this way—it just acts as a dramatic device. The lives of the characters in the film revolve around a daytime soap tellingly called *Other People*, which Sean writes and Paul stars in.

Yet the limitations of using the soap format are nowhere more apparent than in the bizarre ending of the film. Judith Williamson has written perceptively about how the horror, melodrama and detective genres have been used repeatedly not just in fictional accounts of the Aids virus but also in our "common sense" understanding of the disease. Slotting the incomprehensible into familiar narratives is one way we try to make sense of it, but it also precludes other, more political, reactions. *Longtime Companion* can make the disease accessible through this soap opera structure but then cannot cope with the demands that the structure makes on it.

Soaps may never have overall resolutions but they do have mini-ones. Here, death is the only closure. And it is repeated over and over again. Yet the demand for the happy ending persists and is granted in a fantasy sequence in which all the dead come alive again as a cure for Aids is found. Sure we have to have hope, but such a crass scene is insulting.

I couldn't help wondering what Vito Russo, the New York writer who appears in *Common Threads*, would have made of it. He lost his lover and now has the disease himself but remains admirably angry, honest and unsentimental. "Intellectually I believe that when you're dead, you're dead—that's it." Nevertheless he made a panel in the Aids Memorial Quilt for Jeffrey as part of the Names Project. The quilt, with its connotations of tradition and domesticity, grows bigger each day as more panels are added to it. It serves not just as a reminder of those who are gone but brings together those who have lost their friends, lovers and relatives.

Common Threads picks out five stories from the quilt, straight and gay, black and white, including David Mandell, a haemophiliac who died at 11. It is a real tearjerker, as it should be. But it also reveals the criminal negligence of governments who still talk about "the general population" as if gay people were not part of it. It exposes our inability to deal not only with deaths from Aids but with death in general. Michael Bronski's plea that having politicised sex by linking the personal with the political, we need also "to politicise death", is more relevant now than ever. Death is not a metaphor for anything, no matter how hard we try to make it one. Though we are continually told that we don't know how to talk about death or Aids, *Common Threads*, through the stunning eloquence of ordinary people, shows that we not only can, but we have to.

Common Threads *is showing as part of the Voices from the Frontlines event at the ICA, The Mall, London SW1 until 9 September.* Longtime Companion *opens on 21 September.*

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Television

Birds a-flutter

Ben Thompson on the cosy experience of the sit-com

Surveying the feast of situation comedy that is promised in the autumn TV season, it is hard not to feel a twinge of *déjà vu*. This applies not only to those shows which are somewhat past their sell-by date (another series of *Never the Twain*) but also to factory-fresh offerings like *Keeping Up Appearances* with Patricia Routledge as Hyacinth Bucket, "a woman obsessed with maintaining a certain decorum", and *On the Up*, with Dennis Waterman as self-made man Tony Carpenter.

These programmes might never have been on before but there is already something familiar about them, and that is how it should be. Breaking new ground and setting pulses a-flutter is not something most sit-coms set out to do. The familiarity which breeds contempt also adds contentment, for the sheer predictability of the world according to the sit-com is as essential to its appeal as a uniquely cosy experience.

The stock characters—interfering mothers, zany students, nosy neighbours—are like old friends. The conventions of the genre allow the urgent concerns of sex, age and, above all, class, to be rehearsed at a level of respectability and decorum unheard of in most parts of Britain. Contemporary allusions present a problem, since reality cannot be allowed to intrude too rudely. This is why so many sit-coms seem to be lost in a 1970s that never existed. Modernity is denoted by a symbolic shorthand of portable phones and organic food shops.

It doesn't have to be like this. **Birds of a Feather**—the surprise comedy hit of last year, now returning for a welcome second series (BBC2, Thursdays at 8.30pm)—is the story of two sisters, Sharon and Tracey (the choice of names is admittedly not the subtlest of pointers as to social origin) learning to cope on their own after their husbands have been banged up for armed robbery. This series was marked out from the beginning by a determination to say the things that most British sit-coms would definitely leave unsaid. The relative saltiness of the language brought an initial flood of complaints and a repeat an hour later than first scheduled. The location, too, is not the usual suburban sit-com nowhereland of *The Good Life*'s "Surbiton" or *May To December*'s "Pinner"; Sharon hails from a horrible flat in Edmonton, her sister (who has done well for herself) from the neo-Georgian splendour of Chigwell, Essex.

The situation has more than its fair share of stereotypes—man-eating Jewish neighbour Dorien for instance—but there is a quality of robust female sauciness about the dialogue of real-life best friends—Pauline Quirke and Linda Robson—in the lead roles that makes a welcome change from the overwhelming maleness of standard-issue sit-com innuendo.

In the first episode of the new series, the only men to feature are a series of plumbers. Our heroines' determination to find a boiler-fixer who doesn't suck his breath in over his teeth eventually leads them to call on a pair of women plumbers, but only after Sharon has convinced Tracey that it doesn't matter if they're lesbians.

This is not exactly a landmark of sisterhood—but at least *Birds of a Feather* looks for cheap laughs in the world as it is, rather than as the tabloids think it ought to be.

Like the much-praised American sit-coms *Cheers* and *Roseanne*, *Birds of a Feather* is the work of a team of 12 writers, rather than the one or two usual in British TV. This in itself, however, is no guarantee of quality, as anyone who's watched *My Two Dads* will attest. The virtue it shares with its top-ranking US counterparts is the ability to exploit and laugh about traditional sit-com obsessions (in America the family, in Britain class distinction) rather than

The stock characters of soaps—interfering mothers, zany students, nosy neighbours—are like old friends

simply to pander to them. Tracey's son Garth writes home from public school, "Routledge said I came from a violent family, so I decked him."

Given that such a high proportion of Britain's best-loved shows—*Only Fools and Horses, Porridge, Steptoe and Son*—have come from the other side of the tracks, it's strange that sit-com writers should have found it so difficult to cope with the idea that large numbers of people might not actually be doctors, lawyers, vets or bank managers. The fact that the most commonly recurring hero tends to be a middle-aged, middle-class, divorced, white male, his ego under siege from wise-cracking children and interfering elders, probably says more about the problems of the people who create sit-coms than the people who watch them.

Dissident culture has finally made it, says Mark Sinker

SKY's animated bluecollar family sit-com, **The Simpsons** (6.30pm Sundays, from this week), may at last be the correct bait for Britain's satellite-resistant public. It's just subversively hip enough to tap into the most hardcore constituency of TV-watchers (bored pre-teens of all ages). It's also funny and immediate enough not to alienate everyone else.

Actually, as a targeting strategy, even this may be too little, too late. Piracy is as likely to cream off the benefits (one good programme won't justify a dish and it's cheaper to ask the dish-owner in your street to make you videos). But it does give support, for the first time, to the longstanding Murdoch claim that he can be good for TV's creative imagination. This will be hard to swallow in many quarters fanatically opposed to even the possibility of better television out of commercial necessity.

The fact is that Murdoch's Fox network has brought squirmy new life to American TV, by ignoring the pervasive safety-first good-taste codes. Built round one-liner banter, the character-play in *The Simpsons* is probably even a touch below the standard US sit-com, but it is shorn of sentimentality (violently, by US standards, acceptably, by ours), and boasts swirls of dark, undergrounder observation.

There has never really been a mainstream programme where the mockery of the very idea of parental authority was so total. Father (Simpson), who works at a hilariously unsafe nuclear plant on a hill above the town, is an amiable idiot at best. His wife Marge, a subterranean feminist with a six-foot blue beehive, never asserts herself (even though she's always right).

The two speaking children, Bart (bratty underachiever/future criminal, ten) and Lisa (misunderstood genius/future beat-dropout, eight) know far more about real life, street life, and pop cult life than either parent (or any TV executive anywhere). Bart, in particular, has become a counterculture hero—spawning a series of bootleg T-shirts featuring a *black* Bart, blending his snotty catchphrases and attitude with a variety of African-American slogans.

In 1979, in a catalogue for an underground record label, Gary Panter, cartoonist and Texan primitivist, set out what he called the *Rozz-Tox* manifesto—a call to punk artists to use any means necessary to infiltrate, warp and so resurrect, mass media forms (he went on to design *Peewee's Playhouse*, the hyperkinetic and very odd Saturday morning tots' show).

The Simpsons comes from the pen of Panter's friend and fellow-cartoonist, Matt Groening, whose blankly anomic strip *Life in Hell*, running for several years in New York's *Village Voice*, allowed him to develop his cheerful contempt for family, work and the American Way (also for the languages of advertising and marketing—*The Simpsons* showcases his genius for realistically dud shopnames and brandnames).

The Rozz-Toxers, slyly locking into the brainless, dead-end commercial zones in American TV, have provided programming for the "younger, smarter market" that grown-up TV in the UK has spectacularly failed to exploit.

There are obvious compromises that have to be made to get a project like this on track, and *The Simpsons* is definitely more amiable than radical. But then, punk sensibility has always been half in league with sleazy commerce—because it had no option. You only have to try and imagine the quality middlebrow mafia's response to the original proposal to see why "consumer choice" retains its rogue energy.

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George Michael 1990 model: the fifth richest man in showbiz still wants to be all things to all people

Music

Pass the Pimms, George

Sean O'Hagan on eighties lounge lizard, George Michael

The way I see it, George Michael's earliest role model was Bryan Ferry. This was a mistake. Bry had Roxy Music—*the* early seventies pop trash aesthetes and a group who were acutely aware of the intelligence beating at the heart of any pop song that strived for timelessness. George had Wham!—*the* early eighties pop wideboys, a duo devoted to pop disposability (not, in itself, a problem, mind) who wouldn't have recognised pop's trash aesthetic had it metamorphosed, Madonna-like, before their disbelieving eyes.

Bry moved effortlessly from dayglo designer grebo to *louche* lounge lizard before you could say "Pass the Pimms." Yet something about the contrivance, the sheer self-consciousness of those early songs—*Smoke Gets in Your Eyes* anyone? — spoke volumes about *intent*—if not execution. Ferry was a lounge lizard because he *willed* lounge lizardom upon himself. George, on the other hand, forsook Wham's party daze for an eighties designer pop (for once, the term applies) which was functional, unobtrusive and, occasionally, startling—that "guilty feet ain't got no rhythm" line in *Careless Whisper* was morning-after-the-nightclub-before sexual guilt to a tee.

But George's move towards lounge lizardom was paved, and indeed grounded, on good intent. He wanted to be all things to all people *and* a class act. Dueting with Aretha, the queen of soul, approved by Di, the Princess of Wales, poor Michael did the only decent thing and went to Hollywood. The Hollywood George Michael album was called *Faith*—Bryan Ferry would never call an album "Faith" except in irony—and, on the back of its Grammy award and five US Number Ones, George ascended into the rarified ether of global stardom. By 1988, he was the fifth richest man in showbiz.

The 1990 George Michael has no role models. His celebrity has taken him way beyond the Ferry league and, looking around him, he baulks at the lifestyles of his fellow superstars, at Madonna's celluloid hubris, at Michael Jackson's sci-fi self-delusion. And, ironically, for George Michael success has threatened his serious artistic pretensions. Where does George Michael, eighties superstar, go in the caring, sharing nineties? On to *The South Bank Show*—that's where.

Why was George Michael on *The South Bank Show* last week? Commercial clout? Artistic credibility? The cult celebrity? (Yes. No. Yes.) For people who think pop has an uninterrupted lineage, a pop pedigree that remains intact come what may (glam/punk/acid) George Michael is proof of the enduring values of craftsmanship, showbiz and plain, old-fashioned entertainment. The *South Bank Show* is George's Intellectual Grammy Award. For the Grammy Board, George Michael was America's finest "rhythm and blues" artist. For Melvyn Bragg, George Michael "is the most interesting English singer and songwriter to come out of the eighties. He's a good songwriter and an excellent performer."

What is going on here? A confederacy of dunces? A marketing conspiracy? An exercise in mass-delusion? (Yes. Yes. Yes.) If George Michael is an "r'n'b" artist, the Pope's a Protestant. If George Michael is the most interesting English singer-songwriter of the eighties, where does that leave Morrissey, Paddy MacAloon, Shane MacGowan (OK, he's Irish, but you get my drift)?

If the Grammy Awards or, more importantly, Melvyn Bragg, confessed that what they were celebrating was celebrity, success, phenomenon and not artistic worth, George Michael might be miffed but the rest of us could breathe a sigh of relief that things weren't quite as surreal or debased as we thought they were. Has anyone involved actually listened to George Michael's latest LP, *Listen Without Prejudice* (is that an order, George?), which is released this week, or simply taken the Weegee cover photo, with its arty connotations and serious artist intimations, at face value? What we have here is pop without irony, pop striving to *authenticate* itself, to be part of the great, unbroken, Melvyn Braggian lineage. Pop that eats itself on its pretension and pastiche, that pays lip service to soul (an utterly *faithful*, thus utterly pointless, Stevie Wonder cover) without understanding the particular *frisson* of the form.

Ultimately, George Michael, the music, if not the man, represents the triumph of corporate pop, of marketing strategy, of artifice without irony. Very eighties and, before we all kid ourselves to death, probably very nineties too. Not very *South Bank Show*, though. I trust you watched without prejudice.

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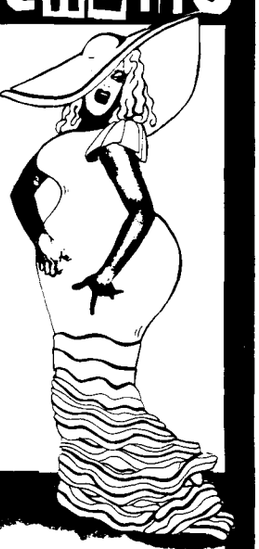

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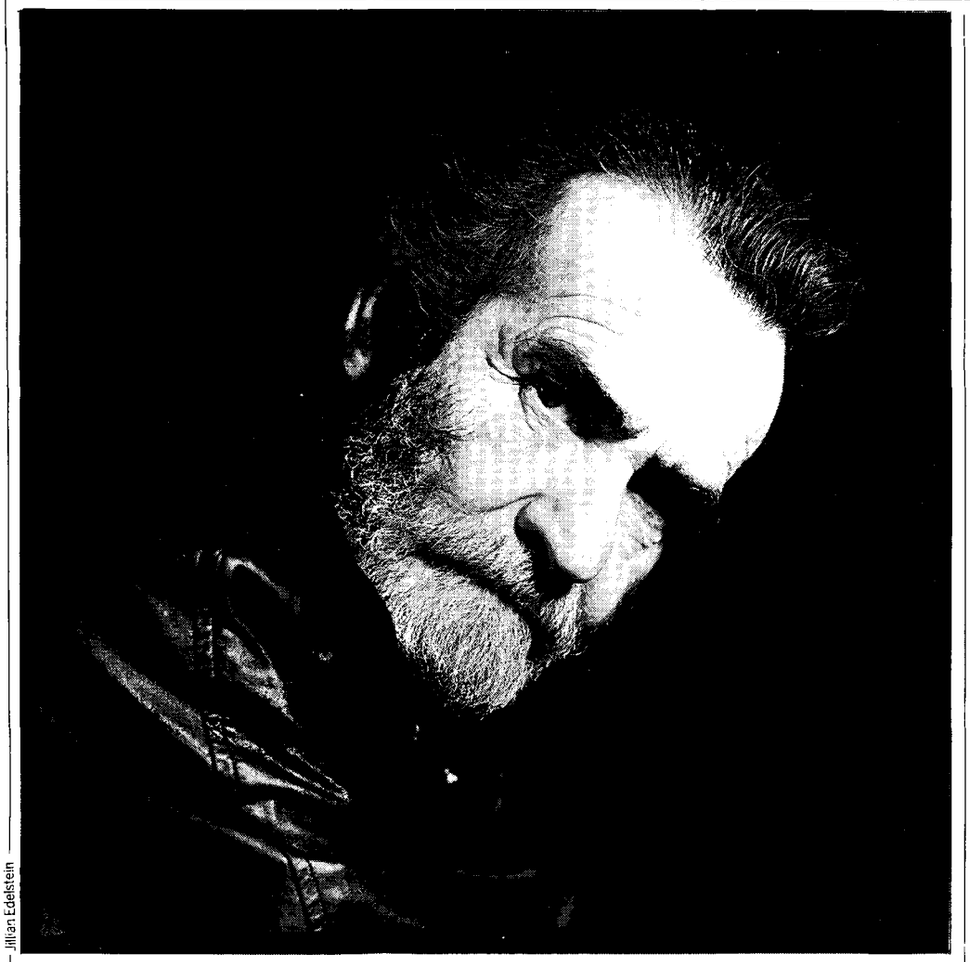

Jillian Edelstein

Fugard: representing the slender hopes for a humanitarian South Africa

Theatre

Interview with Athol Fugard

Paul Allen talks to the South African playwright

In 1961 Athol Fugard appeared in his own play *The Blood Knot* with the black actor Zakes Mokaes. Fugard is white but is dark enough to pass for "coloured" under apartheid, and the play told the story of two brothers who have been classified differently by the state. For nearly 30 years since then, Fugard has been confronting audiences in South Africa and elsewhere with hard evidence of the way his country's politics reduce the lives of ordinary people first to absurdity and then to tragedy.

But **My Children! My Africa!**, which is beginning a tour of Britain at the National Theatre this week, is different. The three characters in it are, once again, prised apart by the politics but this time they are also actively engaged in political life. It is the first time Fugard has put the struggle itself on stage. Is this, I asked when I met him, a response to the changing situation in South Africa?

"It might be the case. But I would also like to believe it is because the story which happened to demand my attention at this point in my life was one which had a direct and potent political connection."

"It was inspired by actual political characters. The central provocation was a news item on the back pages of my local Port Elizabeth newspaper, reporting the death by way of necklacing of a school teacher, a man who had stayed at his desk in spite of a call for a boycott of his school and all classes."

"It was a very modest item compared with the lurid front-page headlines. 1984, when this play is set, was the height of the unrest in South Africa and there were reports of a massacre of 20 people only a few kilometres from my front door. But it was the little item which caught my attention and somehow encapsulated the tragedy of South Africa at that time."

In the play the teacher is an elderly man, an idealistic black whose quiet attempts to subvert the system have earned the impatience of a new generation of radical pupils, including the one he has teamed up with a privileged white in a school debating team. The teacher's ultimate commitment is to a liberal ideal of education but he is also stubborn and zealous. It is this combination that leads him to be perceived as a collaborator. His end is tragic but Fugard refuses to condemn him or those instrumental in his destruction.

"I have never been very good at identifying villains in my plays. I wanted each character to command the sympathy and understanding of the audience so that by the end the audience leaves the theatre asking, as I have so often in South Africa, 'but who is right?' The central metaphor of the play is the debate."

Fugard is a playwright who tells the stories that trouble him. He is political in the way that Arthur Miller is political, because of his creative sensibilities rather than a natural didacticism, and because there are no non-political stories in South Africa. "You can be involved in the most intimate and private relationship and it will be there: politics will inform everything you say and do. And political life itself is very direct, very dramatic, very simple. The enemy is identifiable regardless of which side you're on."

In the British theatre, narrative, and especially emotional involvement, has become unfashionable. This can make Fugard seem old-fashioned. More importantly perhaps, since *Waiting for Godot* there has been a strand of nihilism in European theatre which has spread disillusion with politics as a subject except for those with a very clear message to preach. Again, Fugard seems to hark back to a pre-1950, less cynical or ironic dramatic tradition. But his moral status as a writer seems to make him impregnable to the vagaries of fashion.

Of course there are doubts as to how effective theatre has been in the struggle against apartheid. Apart from the temporary removal of his passport, the authorities have allowed Fugard and theatres like the Market in Johannesburg and the Baxter in Capetown to carry on when they have suppressed novels, television and films. Fugard thinks they got the theatre wrong, didn't realise its importance, though at times he's shared the doubts himself.

"Now I think that at the minimum theatre has been responsible for maintaining awareness and a certain conscience about the way things were developing. But, more importantly, I believe it has been a provocation in terms of social change. It is a strengthening faith in the power of the spoken and written word that lies at the heart of *My Children! My Africa!*

Fugard is now 58 and he recognises that at some level he has been dealing with his own situation in writing about the rejection of the old teacher's ideals. If the boom in multiracial and black theatre in South Africa supports his notion of theatre's importance it has also thrown up a new generation of writers anxious to distance themselves from him, impatient with the "white liberal" label of which he is proud.

"They see a white man being a spokesman for what has happened to black people and they are naturally intolerant. My response is that I haven't been anybody's spokesman. I've written very selfishly, not to be representative of anybody but myself."

In fact, the leading black playwright Mbongeni Ngema (*Asinamali*, *Woza Albert* and *Township Fever*) has rejected the idea of a separatist black theatre completely. Despite the fate of the old man in his play, Athol Fugard may both represent, and be responsible for, the slender hopes that remain for a humanitarian next stage in South Africa.

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Art

Entrapped by the environment

Deanna Petherbridge on the visual battles of public art

The most successful public art work in recent years—perhaps the *only* totally successful large-scale work— is **Eduardo Chillida**'s installation at Donostia Bay, San Sebastian. Here a powerful contemporary art statement—three steel elements gripped within the living rock, and combing the winds and the sea—enriches a natural site with poetry and drama. Art is integrated with place.

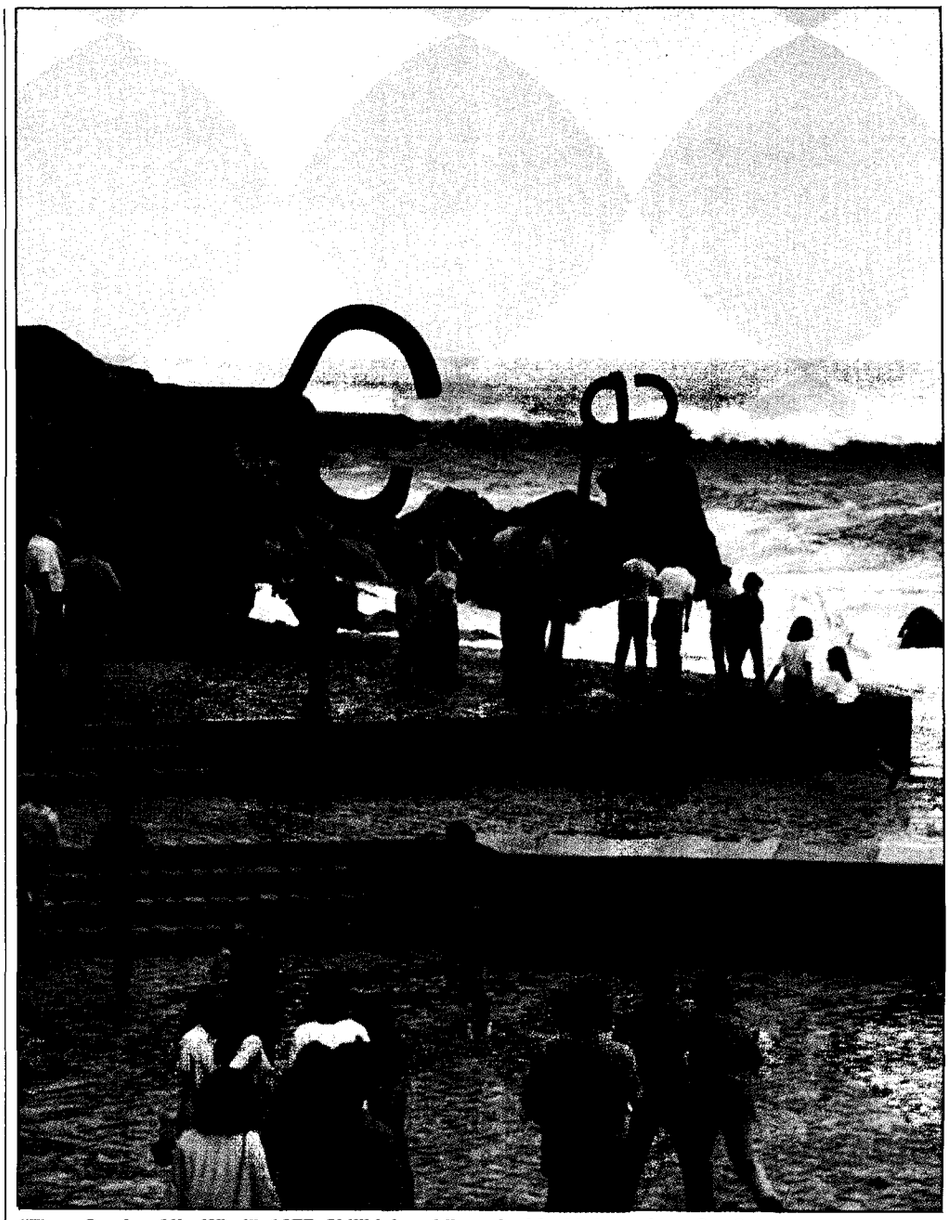
Chillida is the subject of the Hayward Gallery's exhibition (until 4 November); a belated tribute to an artist little known in this country. The Basque sculptor received the Grand Prix of the Venice Biennale 32 years ago, and this year Venice is again doing homage to him, in a large exhibition at the *Ca' Pesaro*.

As well as sculptures and drawings, the London exhibition includes an examination of four of his major public projects in Spain. These projects serve to highlight some of the issues of "public art", which is becoming an increasing force in Britain, as more local authorities move towards the adoption of Percent for Art schemes.

The polemic of public art is not just a question of how the private preoccupations of contemporary art can be adapted to the needs of public usage, but also about power and politics. The power to dispense patronage can be in the hands of individuals, as for example in Athens, where a notable programme of art commissions is being promoted by an enlightened mayor (as part of the greening of that polluted city), or the result of a powerful cultural lobby, as in Seattle, which now benefits from state, county and city Percent for Art schemes. It can also be in the hands of the artist, when he (and it's usually he) is seen as a figure of national importance.

Chillida was born in the same year as Britain's Anthony Caro and Eduardo Paolozzi. They have both been granted knighthoods, but not the same public opportunities as Chillida. He had the chance to entirely redesign a city square commemorating Basque history; he has raised a monument to the dead of Guernica, and is about to install a 6m high concrete sculpture in the old Seville salt dock.

His reputation within Spain allows Chillida to go in search of the perfect site for placing an already conceived artwork, as with the gigantic concrete sculpture now under construction on the cliffs of Gijon, which captures the horizon of the sea within a huge curved window. In interview, he remarked on the curious fact that most of the sites he has selected for sculptures already contain fortifications, as if there were a congruence between strategic and artistic value. "But I want to question space, not control it."



"Three Combs of the Wind", 1977: Chillida's public project for his home town San Sebastian

The public art debate in this country and the United States is increasingly concerned with issues of public legibility and social responsibility, and to some extent stems from a reassessment of the "heroic" role of the artist in society. The recent introduction of figuration in his public commissions by sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi reflects this debate. Chillida, however, belongs to another artistic generation. He is an abstract sculptor in the grand mid-century tradition, entirely devoted to questions of art. His preoccupations are with form and materials, scale and weight, space and place. "What is best for me will be good for others," he says—but without arrogance. To him, the artist is still the mediator of a public "humanity", and his faith in art-as-revelation is undimmed.

Within the confines of the Hayward each powerful abstract sculpture creates its own space and defines its own language. But other questions are raised by seeing two of Chillida's sculptures placed outside in the sculpture court. Here the grim architecture of stained concrete fights a visual battle with the sculptures of rust-patined corten steel. Just as, perhaps, the grim underpass of the *Paseo de la Castellana* in Madrid downgrades Chillida's suspended concrete work *Meeting Place 111*. Franco once banded Chillida's public work as subversive. This is not art as subversion, within Franco's meaning of the term, but environment subverting artistic intention.

As with Richard Serra's controversial public works in New York, there is a delicate balance between site and art, between artist's intention and others' perception. Although few would deny the power of Serra's abstract sculptures, nevertheless his massive curve of rusting corten steel undoubtedly increased the desolation of its urban site. Art in the gallery and art in public places address different issues, even though the quality of imagination is paramount in both.

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The wizardry of Boz

DICKENS
Peter Ackroyd
Sinclair-Stevenson £19.95

Anthony Quinn

Dickens House Museum

It is sadly appropriate that the animating principle of Charles Dickens's life should also contain the seeds of his death. He once described a reading of his Christmas story *The Chimes* before the actor William Macready: "If you had seen Macready last night—undisguisedly sobbing, and crying on the sofa, as I read—you would have felt (as I did) what a thing it is to have Power." One detects a tyrannical relish behind the observation, though the will to maintain that power made a misery of his domestic life and put an end to his earthly one. It is Peter Ackroyd's triumph in this new biography to explain how the art and the life interanimated one another, and how the richness and complexity of that relationship gave voice to the values and concerns of a whole age.

There is a standard practice among literary biographers to line up a writer's fictional characters and then pick out their real-life counterparts as if from an identity parade. So with Dickens comes the routine assumption that the feckless Mrs Nickleby is simply a duplicate of his mother. Ackroyd is properly heedful of this laziness, arguing that Dickens "entered a world of words which has its own procedures and connections", a world in which reality could be twisted into comical and unexpected shapes.

There is, of course, no doubt that Dickens "drew" from life. What Ackroyd does is rootle in the capacious boiler-room of the novelist's imagination, beckoning us closer to the furnace-blast of his inventive energies. Dickens had a fascination for fire, whether in its blind violence or the charred desolation it leaves behind. He would visit the ruins of conflagrations, and often described himself "blazing away" at his work; in *Bleak House* he went so far as to have Krook disappear by spontaneous combustion.

Others saw fire in him, too. One acquaintance recalls times when he was moody and his eyes would shine like "danger lamps". Family and friends came to know his mercurial temperament all too well, genial and animated at one moment, taciturn and gloomy the next; his kindness and consideration were as notable as his immoderate rages. Yet what Ackroyd conveys better than anything else is Dickens's *strangeness*. His brother Frederick once reflected that he was "*odd* sometimes", and the sentiment echoes throughout these pages.

His oddness was unfathomable, disturbing. In 1835, when he was 23, he married Catherine Hogarth, though he remained close to her younger sister, Mary; when the latter died two years later at the age of 17, Dickens was plunged into an intense, near-hysterical grief. No death, then or later, would affect him so profoundly. But what kind of man would keep all the dead girl's clothes and two years later still be taking them out to look at? At the other end of his life, Dickens, now separated from Ca-

The young Dickens with the Hogarth sisters—Catherine, whom he married, and Mary, whose early death plunged him into near-hysterical grief

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therine after ten children and much acrimony, would have a similarly odd involvement with another Hogarth sister, Georgina. Rather than fly to the aid of her abandoned sibling, Georgina chose to stay with Dickens, slipping into the ambiguous role of mother and housekeeper amid a welter of unlovely speculation. It would not be mere flippancy to suggest that Dickens actually married the wrong sister.

Indeed, considering that all the significant relationships of his private life were with women, it is surprising how little Ackroyd has to say about Dickens's sexuality. That he was "too driven a man to be also a sensuous one" seems a reasonable proposition, but it scarcely explains why women in his fiction are either idealised as virtuous innocents or lampooned as garrulous grotesques. Certainly his mother left her mark on him, though there is reason to doubt that she was quite as heartless and neglectful as Dickens later claimed. No more satisfactory a parent was his father, a chronic insolvent who leeched off his famous son, with or without his consent. There is no small irony in the contrast between the novelist who hymned the sentimental joys of hearth and home, and the man who said of his father and family, "He, and all of them, look upon me as something to be plucked and torn to pieces for their advantage... My soul sickens at the thought of them."

But whatever the familial agonies, there was always the work, majestic, absorbing, prodigiously inventive—the wizardry of Boz. One of this book's most illuminating passages concerns the methods of his composition, the intense and irritable process which writing entailed. One friend remembered his "muttering to himself, walking about the room, pulling his beard and making dreadful faces". On separate occasions his children accidentally disturbed him at work, and both of them—first Mamie, then Charley—recall their father acting out scenes to himself, looking up but not seeing them, lost in a private, hallucinatory world. At these moments we glimpse—no more—the mystery of his inspiration, the singularity of his art. Yet writing was never enough to assuage his terrible restlessness: to burn off superfluous energy he would take a 20-or 30-mile walk, visit friends, deliver readings, stage theatricals, climb mountains, tour continents—anything to exhaust the nervous furies that drove him on.

Ackroyd details all this with eloquence and probity and gravitas. He is careful in his speculation, no less than assiduous in his research—Dickens could not be paid more generous *hommage*. The biographer's one fall from grace—and regrettably it's quite a long fall—is his decision to slip in a few imaginative interludes of his own, including a rather silly interview with himself about the nature of biography. These insertions are a mistake, being camp and arch and faintly patronising (didn't Ackroyd think these questions would occur to his readers?). Perhaps he felt vulnerable after completing this enormous labour of love and devised them to pre-empt unfavourable criticism—but couldn't he have trusted us a little?

The need to shore up convictions of his own supremacy proved to be the death of Dickens, and there is a low note of melancholy in Ackroyd's account of his final months. As he travelled around the provinces on his relentless reading tours, his health perceptibly waned. Perceptible, that is, to all but himself. His will to captivate an audience assumed an almost pathological shape when he brought into his repertoire the murder of Nancy by Bill Sykes. It left audiences horror-stricken, and Dickens a haunted man. He wrote, "I am murdering Nancy... I have a vague sensation of being 'wanted' as I walk about the streets... I have a great deal of murdering before me." The strain of this double-act as both victim and murderer was plainly killing *him*, but he wouldn't—couldn't—stop. Exhausted, racked with pain, he died at the age of 58, never realising "how strange a writer he was, just as he never saw what others saw: how strange a man he was."

Landslide Lyndon

MEANS OF ASCENT: THE YEARS OF LYNDON JOHNSON
Robert A Caro
Bodley Head £20

Hugh Brogan

Robert Caro's second volume of his biography of LBJ is chiefly concerned with the 1948 election that carried Johnson into the Senate. It has not had an altogether favourable reception in the United States.

For instance, the reviewer in the *Texas Observer* (proprietor R Dugger) thinks it markedly inferior to Ronnie Dugger's book on the same subject. Many have objected to the hagiographical treatment of Johnson's rival in the election, the former governor Coke Stevenson. The word has gone about that the work contains nothing new. There is substance in all these comments, but taken together they do not amount to much, and they need not concern British readers in the slightest. No one who puts down £20 for *Means of Ascent* will feel, later on, that the money was misspent. All the merits which Caro's admirers relished in his masterpiece, *The Power Broker*, are displayed again. This is a richly rewarding book.

A word more about one of its faults. Caro is indeed sentimental about Coke Stevenson. Stevenson was a fake Democrat who, from 1948 onwards, always voted Republican in national elections; yet, in Texas, which was still part of the Solid South, he was Johnson's competitor in the Democratic primary. He was a south-western reactionary of the same type as "Cactus Jack" Garner, Roosevelt's cantankerous vice-president from 1933 to 1941, who had to be dropped for opposing the New Deal. Stevenson also resembled Barry Goldwater, LBJ's rival for the presidency in 1964, but was not so warmhearted: he had a vindictive streak.

Caro makes too much of his irrelevant private virtues (he was certainly nicer than Johnson). But the important fact is that Stevenson was the man the citizens of Texas wanted for their senator; they knew him, liked him, agreed with him and voted for him; Johnson had to unleash a torrent of lies, bribes and intimidation to steal the election from him, which he finally achieved by the magnificent margin of 87 votes (they called him "Landslide Lyndon" in Washington after that). The Democratic primary election for the Senate was one of the most corrupt in Texan history, and the grand orchestrator of the thieving was the future president of the United States. Caro, with that total mastery of the sources and details that has always characterised his work, makes the sordid story fully intelligible. For that, I could forgive him much more than his weakness for Ol' Coke.

His fault, rather, is his excessive down on Lyndon Johnson. Caro is a strict political moralist and he cannot pardon Johnson any more than, in *The Power Broker*, he could pardon Robert Moses, for sins and crimes which the very structure of American politics and society makes inevitable (though not, let us hope, eternally so).

Granted, Johnson was a monster. Those who never had to work with him may even find him a lovable monster; Caro anyway makes it plain that he was a heroic one, driving to his goal with as complete a disregard for his own physical safety, health, happiness and convenience as he showed for other people's. He was monstrously comic: this is a book crammed with good political anecdotes. He was monstrously energetic, and a master of politics. He seems to have been quite unscrupulous, and to have had no political principle that could weigh for more than an instant against his overriding conviction that his business was to get himself elected, first to the House, then to the Senate, and at last to the presidency. But what determined the expression of all these traits? Unintentionally, Caro shows beyond question that it was the pre-democratic structures of Texan politics.

His depiction of Texas is as brilliant as his account of Lyndon Johnson's driven soul. It was a state poised between the rural past and the industrialised future; a state still largely Mexican in its Rio Grande counties, and elsewhere part of the segregated south; a state increasingly dominated by big money. Two bogus issues shaped the 1948 race, whatever the candidates wanted: the red peril and the Taft-Hartley Act, passed the previous year. Both Johnson and Stevenson had to prove, again and again, that they were against Stalin and against labour unions; when Johnson, by a masterpiece of trickery, threw doubt on Stevenson's reactionary credentials ("COMMUNISTS FAVOR COKE," screamed the Johnson handouts), he began to gain on his opponent. As later events were to prove, LBJ did not believe that the future lay, or ought to lie, with white supremacy, bigotry, one-party government and red-baiting; but Coke Stevenson did: he wanted the future to be like the past.

Johnson knew, furthermore, that elections were for sale in unreformed Texas, which suffered, among other things, from a poll tax. He

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knew that every church, newspaper and radio programme propagated the myths that suited the barons of oil, cattle and cotton, the myths that kept labour weak and taxes low and that checked all liberal thought as a dangerous heresy (Coke Stevenson, when he was governor, let the president of the University of Texas be forced out of office for liberalism without lifting a finger to protect academic freedom). Since this was the world, and he could not yet change it, LBJ exploited it with a brilliant cynicism, and I for one, though aghast at some of the stunts he pulled, was rooting for him all the way. A modern, democratic Texas was struggling to be born, and Johnson was the midwife.

His tragedy was to be that when at last he attained the presidency and was in a position to consummate his work, other structures—the structures of the cold war—were to bring him down in ignominy. But who could guess at Vietnam in 1948? No one in Texas had ever heard of it. Even for Caro, it lies at least two volumes away. I hope nothing stops him from getting there in the end.

Damsels in distress

GOING WRONG
Ruth Rendell
Hutchinson £12.99
DECEPTION
Philip Roth
Jonathan Cape £12.95

Martyn Harris

Going Wrong is a piece of old-fashioned storytelling, not far removed from Rendell's genre, crime thrillers. There are drug dealers, hit men, gun and sword play. The plot mechanisms are the conventional ones of buried clues and sudden reversals of fortune. The prose is serviceable rather than stylish, with a sprinkling of clichés and worn-out phrases on every page.

The story is told from the point of view of Guy Curran, a former teenage gang leader from Notting Hill, now grown wealthy in semi-legitimate business. His life is dominated by an obsessive love for Leonora, the middle-class girl who was once a marginal member of his gang, and is now about to marry a shabby but clever TV producer.

The world of Leonora and her family, with its environmentalist chatter, liberal newspapers, healthy food, sensible cars and "good" books, is the world of the PLU—the People Like Us. Guy is vulgar, ignorant, materialistic and very nearly mad, but he retains our sympathy through the strength of his love for Leonora and because Rendell never allows us comfortable allegiances. The book is a modern retelling of the mediaeval quest for the imprisoned damsel, but with the usual verities thrown into question.

Guy is a vicious thug, but he has constancy, courage and resourcefulness—the qualities of the mediaeval knight, to which his improbably patrician name refers. Leonora and her family are "nice", but they also reflect the oppressive mediaeval family of legend, which chains up the princess in a tower and forces on her an ugly, cowardly husband. Crude coercion is here replaced by middle-class caution and commonsense, and the princess's chains are those of "suitability" and subtle snobbery, but they are no less binding.

In the end we come down on the side of the family rather than Guy, but not without feeling our allegiances strained. We are forced to undertake that re-examination of prejudice and revision of the familiar which is one of the chief functions of a good novel. This is a very good novel indeed and, with its deadpan intersections of Hampstead with gangland, a funny one as well.

The main question posed is about the nature of love, to which we grant such prestige that it forces us to suspend nearly all moral judgments. Guy "loves" Leonora, so we are able to forgive him almost anything, even as he is rubbing out imagined enemies with hired hit men.

In Philip Roth's *Deception*, we are eavesdropping on the conversations of two clandestine lovers: an American writer living in London and his married English mistress. Apart from the odd stage direction ("laughter") the text is entirely dialogue "shed of all expository fat", which may be something of a technical coup, but swiftly becomes mannered and tedious.

It tries to create engagement and immediacy by forcing us to work at disentangling the speakers, but to function properly it needs stronger plot lines than Roth can provide. The voices are too similar and too clever. The attempted substitutions for ordinary description—"Tell me what I look like"..."Close your eyes and describe this room"—are contrived and clumsy. When more voices—of old lovers from the writer's past—begin to pop up, equally undifferentiated, the eye starts to slide unseeing over the page.

The crashingly obvious twist in the tale comes when the writer's wife discovers his notebook of recorded dialogues and he denies they ever occurred. He has invented the whole thing. "It's the story of an imagination in love," he tells her grandly. But as the imagined lover reappears in an appended chapter, discussing her portrayal in the book, we reel giddily again in the intertextual dazzle. Or so, apparently, is the intention, though this reader, I am afraid, could hardly have cared less.

Roth has a mighty literary reputation, while Rendell still inhabits the fringe of the thriller ghetto, but there is no doubt here as to who has contrived the more interesting characters, or occupied the more challenging new territory. Side by side the novels illustrate, on the one hand, the emotional limits of formal innovation, and, on the other, the untapped potential of supposedly exhausted forms. Roth dresses up a banal story with fashionable gimmickry; Rendell adapts the creaking machinery of the genre thriller to ends that are genuinely novel.

Bloomsbury's best girl

HANGING ON: DIARIES 1960-1963
Frances Partridge
Collins £15

W L Webb

Gossip first is traditional with Bloomsbury, so here's what there is. By the early sixties, Clive Bell is only putting his teeth in for meals. Gerald Brenan, the group's great Hispanist, has a weakness for hippy girls in his advancing years, and a tendency to move them into the marital villa near Malaga, "rather comically" adopting some of their ways and language too. Things seem to have gone downhill generally at Churriana—"dust and dirt everywhere... the cold... the cats, messing in the passages and rooms, licking the butter and being sick on the beds... the smelly, unwashed lavatory". During Frances Partridge's stay there early in 1960, Brenan showed her letters from her lately dead husband Ralph and his first wife, the painter Dorothy Carrington, which explained how a second "quadrangular situation" (Gerald-Carrington-Ralph-Frances) connected with the more famous piece of sexual geometry at Ham Spray, where Frances had loved Ralph, and they all lived, well, not happily ever after, but for quite a long time like that.

Once again it's Frances Partridge herself who comes across as by far the most attractive of the bunch, about many of whom she seems too charitable by half. The last instalment of these diaries to be published ended with a childlike cry of heartbreak, "Now I am absolutely alone and forever," at the death of her beloved Ralph. She was 60 when he died; now, at 90—she is as old as this grim century—she lets us see what it meant, being lonely.

One has to get past the obvious irony that most pages are full of meetings and meals and troops of friends whose names make the index a kind of *Almanac de Gotha* of that intelligentry class which England developed instead of an intelligentsia. Her pain didn't make her less committed to the Bloomsbury cult of friendship: since Ralph died, she explains, she "couldn't possibly live except alone, but I deal with my problem by seeing people every day, and throwing myself as much as possible into their lives."

That has something of the quality that makes her Bloomsbury's "best girl": the brisk, brave and slightly naïve rationalism that must have been like a summer breeze in the old Gordon Square hot-houses. Or as Duncan Grant put it, "You are infinitely refreshing—like the advertisement of some detergent or soap that takes the film of dirt and despair away from one," a rum but apt tribute that manages to hint at the Daisy Ashford dimension of her character too. There's a touching moment towards the end of the diary, when she realises that people have a tendency to flinch when she puts on what

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she calls "my arguing boots", or "my frog feet" (for diving into profundities): "As I eagerly embarked on what I so love—an argument—I became aware of the reluctance of my companions."

But the next day the wise child of sixty-something is attending brilliantly to what "the alcoholic 'developer'" is bringing out in Francis Bacon across the table from her, and there are shrewd deflations of Arthur Koestler and Arthur Waley, and many well snapped-up trifles, like Eardley Knollys's story of canaries singing elaborate 18th-century tunes that had been passed down through the feathered generations.

The real story of these diaries is a love story—with all the pain and mystery and bitterness of the love that continues after the loved one's death. ("Sometimes I imagine I have been undergoing a long surgical operation or series of operations. Yes, I'm afraid we must remove one arm, one leg, a part of your side... Painful? Yes, very, I'm afraid, but nothing can be done about it.") She tries the usual therapies—work, walks, the natural world ("By dint of walking I stupefied myself into one big eye")—with the usual mixed success. "I hate going on with my life sentence," she writes at lowest ebb, and, the most painful cry of loneliness from this addicted arguefier, "It takes two to think." But the life-instinct she was loved for, and which keeps her going still, carries her through the worst of the dark, and at the end of these pages, before the next blow comes, there is a grandson, and life renewed.

Prudence Farmer award

Eclectically contemporary

Douglas Dunn examines the poetry published in NSS during the past year and selects the winner of this year's Prudence Farmer prize

New poetry has usually posed problems to the weekly press. How do you print it without giving the impression that it comes low in the list of editorial priorities? In former *New Statesman* days short poems looked as if they had been chosen by virtue of their size, so much were they slipped between reviews and advertisements. Philip Larkin's "The Trees", however, is likely to survive for as long as anyone cares for poetry and the language. I doubt if the same could be said for anything else in that 1968 number of *NS* in which it appeared.

Posterity, of course, is hardly an objective of a topical weekly paper. That *NSS* publishes poetry at all is something for which to be grateful. Three batches of poems were published in 1990 on illustrated two-page spreads. It is more attractive than the hole-in-the-wall approach.

This year Andy Croft's "New Times", all of 36 lines, was the most protracted and ambitious poem. On the same page, Paul Muldoon's two-liner "Asra" looks dwarfish beside it. "New Times" opens with echoes of the first lines of Auden's "September 1, 1939":

I sit in a flat tonight on the Tierpark,
Excited and afraid, watching half a world
catch light
On the edge of this last decade.

From mid-line in the first to a rhyme at the end of the second line, and mid-line in the second line to a rhyme at the end of the third—Croft's unusual rhyme scheme would have been ingenious if more care had been taken with some pretty ramshackle lines in which rhyme creates an effect of doggerel. The poem plays over three dates—1 September 1939; 1956, the year of the poet's birth, which he shares with the two European friends to whom it is dedicated; and the moment of the poem, at the dissolution of east and west and the cold war. I liked it a lot.

Over the last decades love has been one of the subjects to which surprisingly few writers have paid much attention

Michael Longley's "Sea Shanty" is more measured and careful, as you would expect; but it reads like a number of already familiar poems by the same poet. Like "New Times", Matthew Caley's "Failure" is energetic and vivid, but I was unconvinced by his half-rhymes—aura/fauna, click/homework. Refrains are far from common these days, and I liked Caley's "And a Filo-fax is of little use/In Seaton Deleval, Seaton Sluice", which suits the manic jauntiness of the poem as a whole.

In the same issue, Adam Thorpe's "Leaflet" and Stephen Knight's "The Quadrant, Swansea" exemplify the eclectic contemporaryism of *NSS*'s poetry editor, Hugo Williams. Thorpe's poem encapsulates neatly a nagging, environmental conscience, but it falls short of this interesting poet's best work. Whether or not deliberately, Knight's poem about a shopping centre shows how far, or how little, society has moved since the days of Larkin's "The Large Cool Store".

Twelve poems appeared in the issue dated 6 July, including one by the poetry editor. "On the Road" is Hugo Williams in one of his best moods, noticing a fleeting moment from a corner of his eye while in transit. "Crones", by Ruth Padel, is a disconcerting episode in which grandmotherly, maternal and childish fable-making are seen against each other. Domestic drama is the basis of Maurice Riordan's "The Cactus Garden". Sectarian horseplay in Ireland is the subject of Ian Duhig's reminiscence. His mention of "Algerian pirates in Baltimore" could be puzzling if your wide reading has failed to take in the story of how the corsairs raided the south coast of Ireland to punish the O'Driscolls, pirates themselves, who trespassed on Barbary hunting grounds. "Fuck Off Brutus", by Anthony Healy, is a reductive treatment of the notion that important moments of history are much smaller, more interesting, and certainly more vernacular than the official version of events.

July's bumper poetry issue included work by seven other poets. "Deathbed", a translation from Japanese, is brilliant and memorable, and Yamazaki Sokan might have won the prize had he not died in 1552. Poems by Helen Dunmore and Jo Shapcott suggest that if a subject fails to inspire figurative and phrase-making originality or pressurised statement, then about all free verse can do is compound the embarrassment.

Five poems were published at the beginning of the year, including Lachlan Mackinnon's "The Single Life" and Peter Norman's "Shrimping". The second of these ends nicely:

what we commit to memory is not
the lost prize, but the sunlit search.

It is also a bit old-fashioned—"the sunlit search", indeed. Comparing it with Mackinnon's poem, and many of the others, leads me to think that the technical and emotional challenges with which poets are confronted boil down to questions of how to be artistic and memorable while reflecting contemporary life and its sometimes ungainly and recalcitrant vocabularies.

It was far from easy to come to a decision, but Philip Gross's "A Crumb" wins this year's prize. It finds its own, clear, honest level of saying, and it negotiates its way into an arrangement with free and formal verse. Its subject will always be topical, and yet over the past two or three decades love has been one of the subjects of poetry to which surprisingly few writers have paid much attention.

A Crumb

Philip Gross

As you pause to flick away
one crumb, all you've been saying, all
I was about to say

deserts me. I see tired
skin crinkling, dustily, crêpe-papery,
stretched tight, inside

your elbow, in that place
with no particular name. If I could salve
that dryness... I can't make

you beautiful. It frightens me,
how little we miss, so close. Not a crumb.
What do you see

sidelong, like this, that I
deceive myself, I hide; see, saying nothing,
loving somehow, somehow shy

to touch? What love can't do
is save us from ourselves or from each other.
It can't do much, except be true.

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Emotional yearnings

LIKE LIFE
Lorrie Moore
Faber £12.99
TERRIBLE GIRLS
Rebecca Brown
Picador £11.95

Kay Parris

It is one of the saving graces of the human condition that there will always be a demand for new portraits of our emotional and psychological yearnings. These two short story collections, written by up-and-coming American authors, each with a previous collection and one novel to her credit, are both worthy of our attention.

But how do you like your insights buttered? With a light-hearted feather touch, or with all-encompassing merciless great swipes?

Lorrie Moore's *Like Life* tells part-humorous stories of people who long for, or seem to miss out on, something they haven't got, usually close relationships or "bigger" lives. They learn, one, that the something is unattainable; two, that they can get along OK without it; or three, they they had it all the while but didn't notice.

Rebecca Brown's *Terrible Girls* come at you like missiles of bare bones: uncomfortably symbolic, desperate, contorted, devastating and demanding your association. Women, obsessive, betrayed and betraying, move through scenarios of extremity, with personal and political behaviour continually criss-crossing and seeming to represent each other.

Terrible Girls is as emotionally overwhelming as it is experimental. Sometimes it is hard to tell where the symbolism ends and the "real" fictional events begin. But that doesn't matter.

One story opens, "When I said I'd give my right arm for you, I didn't think you'd ask me for it, but you did."

We make strange offers all the time. We even say we'd die for loved ones, and we might. But in what circumstances? This terrible girl asks for her lover's right arm though she doesn't really want it. Then she minds the bloody mess in bed, minds her own guilt and the sickness of it all. She leaves her lover, loses the arm and returns one day full of love and remorse. How much can you forgive someone for such a multi-faceted betrayal? Only enough to take her back.

Brown's girls, both the loyal and the terrible, seem to have an ultimate durability in their feelings for each other. This is one of the strongest, most recurrent and most hopeful impressions in a traumatically brilliant fiction which might otherwise not have "progressed" from the bleak vision of the author's first collection, *The Children's Crusade*.

Lorrie Moore's different literary disposition means that, rather than flash out hope signals, she is happier delivering silver-lined thunder clouds with a bit of a trip in her step. "Life's like that," shrugs *Like Life* in its very title, though it tackles: isolation—particularly that thrown up by the man/woman divide—crushed ideals, disillusion, disappointment, mediocrity, rejection, heartbreak and near-suicide.

While Brown's characters are obsessive dependants, Moore's people are endearingly fatalistic, self-contained, at times poignantly hopeful against all odds. She has a delicate gift for tenderness, for allowing even fictional downtrodden people their self-respect.

The generally leavened tone of *Like Life* has much to do with its peppering of humour, and some indefinable optimistic poetic touches. These bolster the impression that even Moore's most beleaguered characters will gather up the pieces and get on—it's nice for us vulnerable people to suppose that.

Sins of mothers ...and fathers

THE BROKEN CORD: A FATHER'S STORY
Michael Dorris
Collins £16.95
GARY
Brian Masters
Jonathan Cape £11.95

Kirsty Milne

When Michael Dorris adopted an enchanting three-year-old Sioux child, Adam, he knew the boy's mother had died of alcohol poisoning. He didn't know how that would blight his rapturous single parenthood.

Adam started having unexplained and frightening seizures. At five, he was still not toilet-trained; he could not count or tell colours apart. His frantic father harried hundreds of professionals and dared them to tell him Adam's backwardness was more than temporary. "To judge him lacking in innate ability, I darkly hinted, implied poor teaching, racism or a defeatist attitude."

After months of painful research, Dorris established that Adam was suffering from Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), caused by his mother's heavy drinking during pregnancy. This discovery prompted Dorris, who is Indian himself, to confront the taboo subject of alcoholism among native Americans. Health workers told him that on some reservations as many as one in four children had been damaged by alcohol while still in the womb.

Even now, at 22, Adam is unable to relate cause to effect. Unless reminded, he forgets to eat or take the medicine which stops him having seizures. He will go out in sub-zero temperatures wearing a T-shirt because he cannot foresee the consequences.

Faced with Adam's truncated potential, Dorris and his wife, the writer Louise Erdrich, have found their liberal convictions melting away like snow. They have come to believe that in the last resort, mothers of FAS children should be imprisoned to prevent them drinking their way through another pregnancy. (Some Indian reservations, which are entitled to make their own laws, have put this into practice already.)

Dorris sees drinking as pre-natal child abuse. Like other supporters of "foetal rights" (see *NSS*, 30 March), he argues that the mother's civil liberties are less important than her child's chance of a normal life. If Adam's mother had smashed his skull with a baseball bat *after* he was born, society would have intervened. As it is, "because his mother drank, Adam is one of the earth's damaged."

Brian Masters is equally sure that his foster son is the innocent victim of his background. "He is carrying the faults and wickedness of others, and he is bound to do so all his life."

Fourteen-year-old Gary came to him as an aggressive truant with limitless manipulative charm. His mother was dead and his father didn't want to know; his school despaired of him and he was too much for his doting grandmother.

Masters was not the most obvious person to act as substitute parent. He portrays himself as an unmarried literary fogey, sharing his civilised London house with friends and working ferociously on a succession of books. Early in their acquaintance he takes Gary to the cinema. "The film was *Rollerball*, an American confection which I confess I did not understand."

For reasons he cannot fully divine, Masters set himself the task of "delivering Gary from himself". He persuaded Gary's headmaster to have him back at school, paid for a private remedial tutor and arranged for sessions with a psychotherapist. Nothing was too much trouble. In response, Gary continued to steal and lie, recapturing lost ground with his engaging vulnerability and penitent letters.

This elegant, self-critical account of their relationship could not be further in style from Michael Dorris's lyrical, discursive epic. But the two men share unimaginable reserves of patience and tenderness, a passionate faith in human potential and a readiness to move heaven and earth for their charges.

Masters believes he failed Gary, but it is clear to an outsider that he did as much as he could. Just when it was beginning to look as if two years spent praising Gary's maths homework and tucking him up at night had dislodged some of his violent frustration, he locked one of Masters's friends in the kitchen and went for him with a carving knife.

Instead of calling the police, Masters sent Gary home to his grandmother—for which he later reproached himself unsparingly. "A parent, I thought, never turfs his child out of the house, no matter what the fault." He forgets that Gary's real father had turfed him out for a great deal less.

Gary went his own way, re-appearing every three years, still "in a condition of permanent anger". Masters was left with a lasting legacy. He had learnt to see the world through Gary's eyes. "What I saw troubled me to such an extent that I began to feel, and still do feel, that human relationships are inherently dangerous."

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SEPTEMBER AUTHORS AT

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THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 6TH AT 8.00PM

DENNIS NORDEN, GLEN BAXTER & OTHERS

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THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 13TH AT 8.00PM

WILLIAM BOYD

author of *Stars and Bars* will be reading from his new novel *Brazzaville Beach* (Sinclair-Stevenson £13.95)

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 20TH AT 8.00PM

MICHAEL HERR

author of *Dispatches* and screenplays such as *Full Metal Jacket*, will be reading from his new novel *Walter Winchell* (Chatto £12.99)

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 25TH AT 7.30PM

JOHN PILGER

author of *Heroes* will be reading from *A Secret Country* (Vintage £4.99)

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 27TH AT 8.00PM

FAY WELDON

author of *The Life and Loves of a She Devil* will be reading from her new novel *Darcy's Utopia* (Collins £13.95)

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THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 6TH AT 7.00PM

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author of *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* will be reading from her new novel *Sexing the Cherry* (Vintage £3.99)

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 9TH AT 12.30PM

WILLIAM BOYD

will be reading from his new novel *Brazzaville Beach* (Sinclair Stevenson £13.95) **BRUNCH WILL BE SERVED**

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 19TH AT 1.00PM

DICK FRANCIS

will be signing copies of his new novel *Longshot* (Michael Joseph £13.99) telephone 071 937 8432 to reserve signed copies

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 23RD AT 12.30PM

NEIL BARTLETT

will be reading from and signing copies of his new novel *Ready to Catch Him Should He Fall* (Serpent's Tail £8.99) **BRUNCH WILL BE SERVED**

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BILL BRYSON

author of the hilarious *The Lost Continent* will be reading from his new book *The Mother Tongue* (Hamish Hamilton £14.99)

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 13TH AT 7.00PM

NAOMI WOLF

the author of an important and controversial new book on the beauty industry, *The Beauty Myth* (Chatto £13.95) will be discussing its implications.

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 18TH AT 7.00PM

PETER ACKROYD

will be discussing his magnificent new biography of Charles Dickens, *Dickens* (Sinclair Stevenson £19.95)

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 20TH AT 7.00PM

VINTAGE PAPERBACKS

JEANETTE WINTERSON, ALEXANDER STUART & DEBORAH LEVY

We are holding the launch party for an exciting new paperback imprint, Vintage. Jeanette Winterson (*Sexing the Cherry*), Deborah Levy (*Beautiful Mutants*) and Alexander Stuart (*The War Zone*) will be reading from and signing copies of their new novels.

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 25TH AT 7.00PM

BARBARA TRAPIDO

author of *Noah's Ark* will be reading from and signing copies of her magnificent new, long-awaited novel *Temples of Delight* (Michael Joseph £13.99)

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 27TH AT 7.00PM

VINTAGE PAPERBACKS

ROBYN DAVIDSON & JOHN PILGER

John Pilger will be reading from his incisive study of Australia's underbelly, *A Secret Country* (Vintage £4.99). Robyn Davidson, who won the Thomas Cook Travel Award for her previous book, will be reading from her novel *Ancestors* (Vintage £4.99)

SHERRATT & HUGHES 21 NEW ROW, COVENT GARDEN, WC2 *tel:* 071 836 6757

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 13TH AT 6.30PM

HEATHCOTE WILLIAMS

author of *Whale Nation* will be reading from his new book *Falling for a Dolphin* (Cape £9.95)

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W WATERSTONE'S BOOKSELLERS

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Soho in the fifties

A BOTTLE IN THE SMOKE
A N Wilson
Sinclair-Stevenson £13.95

Clive Davis

"Would the novel ever be finished, and if finished, published? Would the theatrical ambitions, instead, take over? A thousand times more important than either question, would Anne and I be married?" I have to admit that, by the time I had reached page 77 of the reminiscences of A N Wilson's hero, Julian Ramsay, I was no longer interested in discovering the answer to any of his questions.

Ramsay belongs to Wilson's familiar stock of characters: a polite, fumbling product of the genteel middle class who is cast adrift in London—or, to be more precise, Soho in the 1950s. With ambitions to become either a great actor or a great novelist, he makes ends meet by working in the Black Bottle, a fly-blown pub where the landlord hurls cheerful obscenities at his customers, who, incidentally, include a once-famous Yorkshire novelist and a none-too-successful pornographer. Away from the pub, Julian pursues Anne, a member of the fabled but decadent Lampitt dynasty. One of the subplots turns on whether or not the Lampitts will be able to keep an important collection of documents out of the hands of the ingratiating celebrity Raphael Hunter, the Melvyn Bragg of his day.

The narrative flags whenever the Lampitts are flaunting themselves centre-stage. Julian's adventures are not much more compelling. Soho's bohemian life has perhaps been the staple of too many novels for Wilson to come up with much beyond stereotypes. Nevertheless he shows, once again, an acute ear for the hypocrisies of the literary world: his account of the launch party for Julian's worthless novel is a cruelly accurate set-piece. Lurking beneath the brittle prose are more serious observations on the nature of art. Amid all the *poseurs* and charlatans, the one truly creative figure in Julian's world is Mr Pilbright, a part-time painter hailed as a genius after years of diligent obscurity in the accounts section of a shirt factory.

But is it worth persevering with *A Bottle in the Smoke* in order to learn all this? It depends, I suspect, on how familiar you are with Wilson's *milieu*. If you have a suspicion that the Lampitts bear a resemblance to the Lambert clan, or that the Black Bottle represents the Coach and Horses (better still, if you ever propped up the bar there in days gone by), this novel may be for you. Otherwise, like me, you will be indifferent.

Four years ago, Wilson wrote a brilliant essay, explaining his decision to give up writing book reviews. His words of warning should be read by all would-be critics of fiction, especially those who are in danger of believing that their opinions really matter. His argument could be reduced to three common-sense points: most books are bad anyway; the good ones that do occasionally come along might not be to the reviewer's taste; and the reviewer is unable to be objective because he has met the author at a party or knew his sister at university.

I do not fall into the last category, so I am left with the first two options. I would like to think that the second of them applies in this case; but my instinct tells me otherwise.

North and south

THE CHALLENGE TO THE SOUTH
The Report of the South Commission
Oxford University Press £5.95

Suzanne Cronje

The south of this title is most of the world: three quarters of mankind, three and a half billion people. It consists of the developing countries which are caught in a poverty trap constructed by the rich powerful north. The south is expanding rapidly. By the year 2000, four fifths of humanity will consist of southerners, most of them starving.

In 1987, a number of southern leaders, fearing the explosive effect of the ever-widening disparities between north and south, set up a commission to examine how the existing global situation had arisen and to make "appropriate proposals... for the building of a new world order". It was given three years to report; *The Challenge to the South* is a summary of its findings and recommendations.

It is the first independent study of its kind: wholly financed by the south, it is free from the constraints of the World Bank and the influence of other north-dominated interests. This is its greatest strength. In a pre-publication briefing, the commission's chairman, Julius Nyerere, the former Tanzanian president, stressed that he and his fellow commissioners had no official standing: "We represent nobody but ourselves." In effect, the commission could hardly be more representative of the south, or more high-powered. It consists of 28 leaders from Africa, Asia and Latin America, including one president (Venezuela) and one prime minister (Jamaica). Its secretary-general, Manmohan Singh, was deputy chairman of the Indian Planning Commission until 1987, when the Indian government released him to work for the South Commission.

Despite their differing political backgrounds, the commissioners were unanimous in adopting the report and its recommendations, which include the creation of a Debtors' Forum, which would help reverse the flow of capital from south to north. Since 1988 the World Bank has been receiving from the developing countries more in debt servicing and other payments than it is lending to them, and the north has been able to attach punitive conditions to its development aid because the south is divided.

The commission proposes practical steps for south-south cooperation, in particular through the establishment of a South Secretariat to coordinate action. It recognises that "some quarters" in the north will oppose such a step as a threat to itself, despite its own institutionalised coordination in the Group of Seven. The report points out that it is this group that has evolved the convenient notion that the development crisis is attributable to misguided policies followed by developing countries: "We believe that the north's attitude is a matter that should be raised with the north at the highest level, and that the south should seek a clear policy commitment of support for its efforts to help itself through south-south cooperation."

The commission proposes institutional reforms at the United Nations to set up a focal structure for economic decision-making within the UN system. Of special interest, in the light of the Iraqi crisis, is the recommendation that this reform should include "changes aimed at democratising and increasing the effectiveness of the UN in dealing with global security and regional conflicts".

Will the north in its present mood even consider these arguments? Nyerere seems confident that it will. "We know you are capitalists," he told a British audience, "but we want you to be *good* capitalists for once." The commission meets for the last time in October, when the formation of the recommended South Secretariat may be announced.

Post-colonial identity

CYRUS CYRUS
Adam Zameenzad
Fourth Estate £14.99
THE FOUR BANKS OF THE RIVER OF SPACE
Wilson Harris
Faber £11.99

Guy Mannes-Abbott

Cyrus Cyrus follows its eponymous prophet across the globe, through a sea of religious and mythological figures. Cyrus writes his last testament from a prison cell, defending himself against charges that include the murder of his three children. An "eternal wanderer", his recurring trials take us through "Eastern, Inner, Western, Under and Prison" worlds. The portentousness of his account is underlined in the words "Ecce Homo" that flash on to his gravestone.

Zameenzad's writing is full of worldly anger, compassion and comedy. Cyrus is born an untouchable in India, growing up a witness to the development of Bangladesh and Indo-Pak wars. He is an outcast in every subsequent society he joins, from an ashram in New Mexico to London, where he ends up on the streets. The humour running through the book ties in with a

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sexual grotesquery that borders on the adolescent.

Cyrus vows to "let my language take a holiday" early on, adding that "a true poet... reduces his work to the barest minimum for the maximum effect." Zameenzad goes on regardless to produce this huge narrative, on to which are grafted miracles, visions and flurries of divinities. He loves paradox, and has a weakness for using two adjectives where one would be incisive, indulging every ambiguity with passion. This is a great shame because narcissistic passages that should have been trimmed obfuscate the brilliance of the remainder.

Cyrus Cyrus is a wildly ambitious novel that does not live up to its promise. Both Zameenzad and Wilson Harris work language over to "utter the unutterable," as Cyrus declares. They also use alter egos to multiply their voices, somewhat superfluously. But though Zameenzad uses narrative with a rare audacity and vigour, Harris's mature prose is its perfect foil.

Wilson Harris has come to that stage in a writing life where *The Four Banks* is both a manifesto and exhibition of his poetic craft. If it lacks Zameenzad's sheer story-telling exuberance, it almost perfects the fabulism developed in the first two parts of this trilogy. Harris's *alter ego* is "Anselm", and this is his book of dreams. In it, he wanders through history as a "living dreamer" to re-acquaint himself with his family past in Guyana. He "invokes them as live absences... they seem to paint one (as one paints them)." They become strategic "stepping stones" in the "abysses" left in his language, to approach a post-colonial identity.

Harris toys with his colonised tongue, lamenting the "thin word of my age". He advocates focusing attention on "the crumb of the Word" to encounter the "unimaginable" in its tapestry. He makes gestural use of quantum physics to write of a "polyhistoric kind of being"; a lapse into occasionally choking self-reference.

The Four Banks is characteristically dense and yet Harris is also capable of the lightest touches. The commonplace image of a couple "making love in a room above a bombed garden in which a single rose bloomed" is a shock that demonstrates a deft and masterful lucidity.

Spoofs

UNAUTHORISED VERSIONS: POEMS AND THEIR PARODIES
Kenneth Baker (editor)
Faber £14.99

Bill Greenwell

This is the fifth major collection of parodies to be published in this country in seven years, and indeed the second from Faber (Simon Brett's *The Faber Book of Parody* came out in 1986). Nevertheless, it is a welcome addition, because canny Kenny has interleaved the spooved with the spoofs, so that, for instance, Carroll's *Father William* faces the naff Southey poem the mick of which is taken so pleasantly.

Though his collection is arranged alphabetically by parodied poet, you suspect KB of some deliberate roguery with his opener—a very funny piss-take of *All things bright and beautiful* by Monty Python ("All things scabbed and ulcerous,/All pox both great and small..."). Here I am, announces the anthologist, mighty with pleasure, You didn't think I'd put *this* in, did you? Anthologists are very often anonymous. It is impossible to read this excellent collection, however, without imagining Mr Baker in a gown and mortar-board, handing out copies as prizes at a school speech day.

Most of the old favourites are here—Hugh Kingsmill's demolition of Housman, Alan Bennett's of Betjeman, Noel Coward's of both Edith Sitwell *and* Cole Porter, and the most celebrated parody of them all (apart from *Father William*, the only one to make all five anthologies), Henry Reed's send-up of Eliot, *Chard Whitlow* ("As we get older, we do not get any younger"), originally an *NS* compwinner. Indeed *NS/NSS* regulars are well represented. Woddis appears nine times (and his predecessor, Sagittarius, four). From the back pages come Allan M Laing, Fagg, Parrott, Sharpless, Benson, Petty, Fiona Pitt-Kethley, Wendy Cope (both successful *NS* compers before going on to higher things), Norman, Greenwell... Yes, we're all there, shoulder-rubbing with coves called Auden, Swinburne, Keats, Coleridge... Peter Norman's "parody" (it isn't, really) is a tongue-twister to emulate a 19th-century effort in *Punch*, and imagines the unlikely spectacle of "a meeker Kenneth Baker". I suspect Peter attempted to out-twit Ken (who invited submissions), only to be out-twitted.

But the Rt Hon KB will never be meek. Indeed, he prints a second poem including his name, a Woddis squib ("The Church of Kenneth Baker/Should satisfy your soul"). He also manages, via some occasionally otiose footnotes, to thank teachers for coping with GCSE (oh Ken, you *shouldn't* have!), praise health service workers, remind us of the great Tory reforms of late, and gloat over the Alliance's demise.

I was sorry not to see Billy Bennett's "A Green Tie on a Little Yellow Dog" included, and missed Andrew Stibbs' classic debunking of D H Lawrence's "Snake", which is called "Slug", and may be found in Eric Parrott's *Imitations of Immortality*. The N J Warburton "Snake's reply" included here is a good joke, but hardly a parody at all.

Where Kenneth Baker scores is in his revival of parodists like Owen Seaman, and the welcome inclusion of gems like Jimmie Pearse's play on "Adlestrop": "Yes, I remember WILLESDEN GREE./(That's what it said, the night the train,/Somewhere along the Jubilee/Pulled up...)." I particularly enjoyed Harry Graham's wicked imitation of Oscar Wilde's "Reading Gaol", an effort called "The Gourmand" ("Some gorge forsooth in early youth,/ Some wait till they are old;... The gourmand gnaws in haste because/The plates so soon grow cold"). Buy the book for auntie to chortle over at Christmas, but be sure it finds its way into your luggage as you head homeward.

Confucius say...

PACIFIC DESTINY
Robert Elegant
Hamish Hamilton £17.99

Radhakrishnan Nayar

The unprecedented economic progress of the nations of the Far East, whose economies are the world's most dynamic, casts doubt on the assumption that capitalism will iron out the specific cultural traits of societies so as to fit a western individualistic pattern. Have non-individualist Confucian values created a type of capitalism which is rendering the economic structures of western Europe and America obsolete, perhaps as surely as western capitalism in general outmoded communism?

Robert Elegant's book gives an affirmative answer. His unambiguous message is that western countries have to discard *laissez-faire* prejudices rooted in western individualism and move towards managed, "consensus" capitalism of the Japanese and South Korean varieties if they are to hold their own.

Elegant's book covers Japan, China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indochina, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Australia. It might best be described as a veteran correspondent's informal guide to the life, achievements and problems of the nations of Pacific Asia, where Elegant worked for several decades after the second world war.

The chief value of the work is in the chapters on the nations of the Confucian Far East. These are the real lands of "Pacific Destiny", and Elegant uses his expertise in their languages imaginatively. His pages are strewn with intriguing ideas about the nature of these societies which only a highly versed specialist could essay. About the Japanese, for instance, he writes: "It is exceedingly difficult for them to put themselves in the place of others. Empathy is not a word often used in Japan. Like their disregard of moral absolutes and their exaltation of violence, their difficulty in imagining, much less feeling, the pain of others makes them formidable in action." This may be a questionable opinion, but it is a stimulating one.

Elegant's grasp of the ways in which innate cultural traits have shaped the nature of these societies' response to industrialism is not matched by a similar interest in the role of social structures. He seems to attribute the relative failure of China, ironically the Confucian society *par excellence*, to the flaws of communism. Yet China lagged hopelessly behind Japan in adapting to industrialism before the communist takeover. The key to that lag lies in the differences between the inherited social structures of China and Japan. The disposition to hard work and discipline which Confucianism fosters, and which Elegant emphasises, needs to be seen in a social perspective. The successful Confucian countries are the ones whose social conditions have enabled them to use those valuable qualities to effect speedy modernisation.

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PUBLIC INTEREST

Right to rent

Can't pay your mortgage? You should have the option of converting it into a rent

Challenge Tory ministers over the failure of their housing policies, and they invariably refer to the growth of home ownership as proof of success. Some 67 per cent of households in Britain now own their home, compared with 55 per cent in 1979. The "right to buy" has played an important role in the process. Since 1980 a million council tenants have bought their homes. So it is hardly surprising if ministers are concerned to maintain the momentum of just about their only housing success story.

Nick Raynsford

Their problem is that the right to buy has been running out of steam. Council house sales peaked at almost 200,000 in 1982, but then fell back to a little below 100,000 a year in the mid-1980s. A combination of more generous discounts, the house-buying boom, and tenant fears of impending rent increases or predatory private landlords pushed the level up again briefly in 1988. However, this revival was short-lived. It soon became clear that the 1988 Housing Act would not result in large-scale privatisation of council estates and even if council rents were going up, the cost of a mortgage was going up even more. The interest rate rises of 1989 put the lid on the right to buy just as surely as they did on so many other dreams of home ownership.

Irrespective of interest rates, there was also a more fundamental reason for the decline in the number of council house sales. The number of tenants able to meet the cost of a mortgage has been dramatically reduced. Many better-off tenants had already been "creamed off" in the 1980s. The smaller council housing stock now contains a higher proportion of older tenants. As the number of lettings has reduced a higher proportion has had to be allocated to the poorest and most vulnerable, who are less likely to be potential buyers. Council housing has been moving towards the role which the government would like—residual welfare housing for the poorest. By definition this means less scope for sales.

Facing the apparently inevitable decline in demand for a "flagship" policy, ministers have been under pressure to devise schemes to make it possible for lower income tenants to buy their homes. Hence the flurry of recent publicity given to the "flexi-ownership" and "rents into mortgages" schemes being run as pilots in Wales and Scotland. Mrs Thatcher, speaking at a Conservative Women's Conference in June, implied that such a scheme could well form one of the main planks in the Conservative manifesto for the next general election. She clearly sees it as a vote winner.

The concept is relatively simple. The tenant takes out a mortgage with repayments broadly equivalent to existing rent levels. This will, of course, normally only service a loan sufficient to cover part of the value of the home. So the remainder is covered by a charge taken out by the council (Tai Cymru and Scottish Homes associations in the Welsh and Scottish pilots) which will be redeemed from the sale proceeds if the property is subsequently sold or the tenant/owner dies.

The charge is expressed as a percentage of the discounted property value at the time the mortgage is taken out. So if the mortgage covers 35 per cent of the value, the charge will cover 65 per cent. There is provision for the tenant/owner to buy an increased proportion, or indeed the full value, at a future date.

The interest rate rises of 1989 put the lid on the right to buy, as they did on other dreams

The attraction of the scheme for ministers is that tenants will not initially have to pay any more to become a part-owner. On the familiar carrot and stick principle tenants will be advised of the benefits of home ownership at no initial extra cost, in contrast with the grim alternative of steep council rent increases. But will the scheme answer Tory dreams as a mark II version of the right to buy?

The evidence from Wales and Scotland does not suggest it will. From the 1,300 properties covered by the Welsh pilot, around 50 applications had been received by the end of July, only four of which had been completed. In Scotland, around 100 applications have come from 115,000 eligible tenants, but just three completions. Despite the hype behind the scheme, 150 applications and seven completions does not look like the basis for an election-winning policy.

Why are the rents into mortgage schemes not providing more popular? There are probably three main reasons. First, it is more complicated and offers less generous discounts than right to buy, so it is unlikely to attract tenants who feel that they might be able to buy outright. Second, it comes up against the deeply ingrained resistance to debt of many, particularly older, tenants.

Third, and most important, it does involve an element of risk. Even if it appears an easy option at the outset things can go wrong. A tenant's income can fall at a future date. If so, he or she can claim Housing Benefit towards rent, but not mortgage, payments. The safety net of Income Support is very restrictive, partly because of cuts introduced in 1986.

For these reasons, tenants may be very reluctant to take the risk, particularly when they can see all around them the evidence of rising mortgage arrears, repossessions and consequent homelessness. So ministers could well find themselves disappointed by their new pet schemes. However, the opposition, mesmerised by the right to buy, on which it was so badly wrong-footed, could easily be seduced into acceptance of the proposals or feel obliged to concoct a "me too" alternative.

In reality, what is needed is not another rents into mortgages scheme, but the reverse. With more than 95,000 households more than six months in arrears with their mortgage, and over 14,000 homes repossessed in the first six months of 1990, there is an urgent need for a mortgages into rents scheme to assist homeowners in difficulty. Useful models have already been developed by various organisations such as the London and Quadrant Housing Trust. But the government and the Housing Corporations have been slow to make the necessary technical provisions to allow such schemes to be taken up to any significant extent.

The Building Societies Association, which ought to be in the forefront of such new initiatives, has been woefully lethargic—indeed, until recently, it has been trying to pretend that there isn't a mortgage arrears problem. Faced with this stunning inertia, the opposition's clear priority must be to develop an imaginative and comprehensive mortgage rescue policy.

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A Shelter publication

Roof

September / October 1990 £3

Ten years of Right To Buy see p.38 FREE

FREE — just pay your rent

Rent-to-mortgage:

WHO BUYS IT?!

Instant home ownership for no more than your rent

MILLIONS of council tenants will be given the key to the door in a new vote-winning scheme to make them home owners. For the cost of their rent – or even less – they will soon be able to buy their homes in an amazing extension to the Government's home ownership campaign.

Tory leaders have agreed to put the revolutionary 'rents to mortgage' scheme at the heart of Maggie's most radical general election manifesto yet.

Ministers think the scheme, which could turn five million council tenants into home owners, will SHAME Neil Kinnock's Labour party, which has had to admit it was wrong to oppose the popular right to buy. Labour is unlikely to support the scheme.

by MAGGIE PHIBBS

GIVEAWAY

A minister said last night: "Handing over ownership of the remaining council homes to their tenants is certain to be in our manifesto."

"Flexi-ownership will appeal to traditional Labour voters while spreading the prosperity of the country under the Government."

The Government might also introduce English pilot schemes before the election, in battleground areas like the Midlands.

A tenant of five years gets a 20% discount, with up to 55% after 15 years. Michelle Forsyth, who has bought her Scottish Homes house under the scheme, told ROOF: "It's a FANTASTIC idea. I never thought I'd be able to own my own home, because I couldn't afford right to buy."

NEST EGG

"But now I know I'll be well off in my old age with the nest egg I've always dreamed about. Home ownership is wonderful. It's changed my life. The Government should introduce this scheme for all council tenants as soon as possible.

"No-one will want to stay with the council – the repairs never get done."

Trial schemes in Scottish and Welsh housing organisations have been a RED HOT success with hundreds of enquiries since they were set up last year.

Maggie is expected to announce a similar give-away scheme for all council tenants at the Tory conference next month in her bid to win a historic fourth term.

When a flexi-ownership tenant decides to sell, the generous interest-free loan on the amount not repaid in rent is returned. The difference between the original price plus the discount, probably tens of THOUSANDS of pounds – then belongs to the tenant, who can join the home ownership ladder.

Rifkind: Homes for all

Field: It was my idea

Continued on page 22

PLUS: Soaraway mortgage arrears page 8

The great council house giveaway - fact or fiction?

A scheme to convert rents into mortgage payments on council houses is being sold as the radical centrepiece of a new Tory housing revolution, but it should carry a government health warning, says the latest issue of ROOF, Shelter's housing magazine. Stoked up by the tabloid press, the hype is a deliberate attempt to sell instant home-ownership to council tenants, but the hidden costs, and the long term financial consequences, mean the deal is hardly the sale of the century.

Don't buy the fiction, buy the facts.

ROOF, Britain's brightest housing magazine, is available on subscription six times a year for £15 to individual subscribers, or at £3 for single copies. Other rates available - contact ROOF subscriptions for details. Subscribe now and get the September issue free - just send back the form below.

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For further information contact Age Concern England Conference Unit. Telephone 081-679 8000 or write to 1268 London Road, London SW16 4EJ.

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Appointments

EAST BIRMINGHAM HEALTH AUTHORITY (Community Unit)
The Queen's Nursing Institute Nursing Development Unit (Community Nursing)

Research Facilitator or Research Nurse

Salary: £15,000 - £19,000 depending on experience. 3 year fixed term contract

We wish to appoint a research facilitator to work in the newly established unit in East Birmingham Health Authority. This Nursing Development Unit is the first to be established, nationally, with an emphasis on community nursing. The Queen's Nursing Institute are supporting the project by funding the research post for a period of 3 years.

The person appointed will be expected to evaluate the work of the Unit over a 3 year period; designing and implementing appropriate research methods. It is also expected that the appointee will work as a member of the Unit team, developing the research skills of staff and acting as facilitator for research being undertaken by team members.

The establishment of this Unit is an exciting and challenging innovation and the person appointed will need to demonstrate considerable initiative and independence as well as broad experience of research work. Possession of a good first degree or higher degree and evidence of experience in designing and carrying out research projects are necessary for this post. Good communication skills are essential and teaching experience may be helpful.

Further information can be obtained by contacting Alan Weale, Senior Nurse Manager on 021 766 6611 Ext 2104.

Application form and job description is available from:- Miss J Cole: 021 766 6611 Ext 2418.

Closing date for applications 26th September 1990.

As a matter of fax: 071-739 9307

RUSKIN COLLEGE OXFORD

TUTOR IN ECONOMICS

Ruskin College has a two-year diploma programme for mature, unqualified students, supported by Adult Education bursaries and trades union and other scholarships.

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- teach and develop a range of subjects within the College's Labour Studies and Social Studies programmes.
- develop and teach on advanced courses in trades union studies
- undertake research work within the College's research framework.

The post will be for one year in the first instance and will be on the UAP Lecturer A Scale, currently £12,086 - £16,755.

Application by letter and cv (six copies). Further details from the General Secretary, Ruskin College, Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HE or telephone 0865 54331.

Closing date: 12 October 1990.

Ruskin is working for Equal Opportunities.

Magdalen College, Oxford
TUTORIAL FELLOWSHIP IN ECONOMICS

Magdalen College proposes to elect a Fellow and Tutor in Economics with effect from 1 October 1991. The successful applicant will be expected to provide tutorial teaching for up to 12 months in each week of full term. The Fellowship is purely a College post, financed by a private benefaction, and therefore carries no University examining, lecturing or graduate supervision duties.

Application forms and further particulars are obtainable from the President's Secretary, Magdalen College, Oxford OX1 4AU. The closing date for applications is 30 November 1990.

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WITH YOUTHWORK SKILLS

This is a new post, initially funded for 1 year. The main aim will be to encourage the participation of young homeless people in New Horizon's campaigning activities. The person appointed will be expected to participate fully in the collective decision-making of the staff team on all aspects of the work.

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New Horizon welcomes applications from all people regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age or religion. New Horizon has no wheelchair access.

We expect all our employees to have an understanding of and commitment to our equal opportunities policies.

For an application form and job details, please contact Nancy Perrin, New Horizon Youth Centre, 1 Macklin Street, London WC2. Telephone: 071-405 1126. Closing date for completed applications September 28, 1990.

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Heartsearch

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PROGRESSIVE MINDED heterosexual widower, senior citizen, not so young but very active, enjoying high living standard. Interests include Arts, music (classical), travel, would like an other gentleman with similar interests as companion/friend, resident near Edinburgh. Please reply to Box (32) 395.

WANTED-GENTLE GIANT with big heart for country girl with same. N/S, 34, attractive interested in life, arts, travel. Box (31) 383.

RED/GREEN MALE (33) post-doc seeks sensuous female in touch with feelings. Oxford/London. Interests nature, walking, politics, literature, eating out, talking, touching, caring, sharing. Long term commitment. If compatible also children. Please write long letter to Box (32) 387.

SCOTS/ENGLISH WOMAN, retired professional, slim, warmblooded, openminded - interests include music, walking, politics - seeks agreeable man for friendship initially. Central Scotland. Write to Box (30) 366.

PROFESSIONAL MALE, 36, W. Yorks based. Many interests including walking, cycling, the arts and greenish politics. Seeks non smoking, thirties female to share similar interests and sincere relationship. Please reply Box (32) 407.

WELL-EDUCATED, ATTRACTIVE WOMAN, 41, lively, musical, wishes to be tempted by a sensitive, imaginative and cultured man into new adventures. Please write to Box (32) 409.

OPTIMISTIC WOMAN, mid-40s, living Cornwall, attractive, intelligent, finding independence overrated, seeks optimistic, intelligent, country-loving man, 40/50, for enjoying today/tomorrow. Box (34) 427.

SOULMATE SOUGHT, lively-minded, interesting man with joie-de-vivre, keen on books, music, walking, travel for similar woman, early fifties. Home Counties west. Box (34) 428.

ATTRACTIVE, WARM, unconventional lady (mid 40s) in visual arts, tired of kissing frogs. Seeks cultured, fun loving, thoughtful prince (44-54) to share laughter, friends, theatre and silences. Photo please. Clwyd. Box (34) 429.

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CAN ANYONE convince this lively, leftish, attractive male television producer (39) that there are intelligent, slim, warm, unattached women (under 40) left in London? Photo/tel. please. Reply to Box (34) 431.

BEAUTIFUL, BLACK, TV PRODUCER, 36, wants to meet single men (30-45). Passions include writing, cinema, dancing and sunbathing. Box (34) 435.

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HAPPY, MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN, own house, garden, interesting jobs (almost), charming teenagers, seeks unattached man for weekend outings. Music-lover essential, especially jazz. N. London. Box (34) 423.

REMARKABLY HANDSOME, creative, interesting, sensitive, tall, hunkish, fun, married, 40, American, male seeks very attractive, tallish female for discreet, term relationship. London. Box (34) 424.

TALL TAURUS MALE, 50s, terminal marriage, just solvent, non-smoker, seeks female 40-50 for intellectual stimulus and fun. London, Berkshire or West Country. Photo and tel no. essential. Box (34) 425.

FORTY AIN'T FAR but this really rather attractive, caring man hasn't found the woman's love and companionship he's dreamed of. If you too would value a stable, equal relationship, greeny pinkey politics, maybe children; are in your early to mid 30s let's exchange letters and pictures and — who knows? Box (34) 426

KIND, ATTRACTIVE, 41 year old woman seeks man, East Midlands. Reply Box (34) 432.

HANDSOME GLASGOW PROFESSIONAL MALE (46). Interests arts, outdoors, health. Seeks caring attractive female to share free time and perhaps holidays. Photo appreciated. Reply to Box (34) 433.

GAY GUY, PROFESSIONAL, 32, disabled, interests include politics, cinema; seeks fun, adventurous guy 25-45. Frank letter and photo appreciated. Please reply to Box (34) 434.

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INDEPENDENT Living Alternatives promotes independence for people disabled. At present we urgently need women who can drive. Helpers provide physical support in return for free board and lodgings plus £40 per week. If you want to become part of a progressive London based community initiative, contact us at: Independent Living Alternatives, Fulton Hse, Fulton Rd, Empire Way, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 OTF. 081 902 8998 ext 270.

BUILD A RELATIONSHIP and watch it grow. Some children have no-one else who really listens to them. Some have little contact with a positive male figure. Join our volunteer group, men & women, and get to know one of these children. If you are interested, live within reach of Islington, and have 2/3 hours a week to spare, contact Span on 071 250 1223.

ADFAM National Helpline for the families and friends of drug users needs volunteers to provide information & support to callers. Full training given. Expenses provided. Helpline is open 10 am to 4 pm Monday to Friday - close to South Kensington tube. Please call Anne on 071 823 9313 for further details.

LEWISHAM Befrienders would like to hear from local people who could give a few hours each week to help youngsters whose only other contact with adults may be remote figures in authority. All interested contact Leonard Davis Co-ordinator, Lewisham Befrienders, London SE8 4AU. Tel: (081) 692-0236.

SOUTH WEST SURREY - local volunteers wanted for HELPLINE being launched for carers of people with mental health problems. Volunteers work from home, must have a phone and preferably experience of caring. Contact Margaret, Guildford (0483) 578269 for further details. The number given on 10th August was incorrect, sorry. Helpline, not yet fully operational, is (0483) 38936.

CHESTER AID for the Homeless requires f/time volunteer project workers to work with homeless men in Chester. Chester Aid for the Homeless has vacancies for residential volunteers in all 3 projects: an emergency hostel, night shelter and long stay resettlement centre. All volunteers receive £25 p/w + board & lodgings. For further details please contact Sally Gear on 0244 318360 or write: Roodee House, 22 Grosvenor Street, Chester CH1 2DD.

VOLUNTEER REGIONAL Co-ordinators Sept/Oct. An unusual opportunity for an executive to make a significant contribution to the welfare of blind people in the UK. A person, possibly early retired, with senior management experience and able to act on own initiative. About 10 hrs p/w for 16 months, administering an appeal and committee based on home locality. Most counties needed. All expenses reimbursed. CV and phone no. to: Michael Holden, Talking Newspaper, 90 High Street, Heathfield TN21 8JD.

FULL TIME FEMALE helpers needed for young disabled woman to live independently in the south west London area. No experience needed, just enthusiasm, a sense of humour and a willingness to learn how to lift. The helper would need to be between 5'4" & 5'8" and weighing not less than nine and a half stones (this is to make lifting easier). Free accommodation with all gas and electricity bills paid and an allowance of £44 p/w. For more details please call Maureen on 071 736 6941.

THAMES HELP

Thames Help, presented by Jackie Spreckley, is a four minute local social action programme. It appears four times a week on Thames Televison at 5.55 approximately (check TV Times for details). Here is a summary of this week's programmes.

This week THAMES HELP is looking at just a few of the options open to women with children who want to return to work or training.

Monday 10th September – Term-time Working

Over the next 5 yrs the number of school leavers available for work will drop sharply, so employers will have to alter their working arrangements to encourage older women back to the workforce. Some employers are already doing this and in tonight's programme we talk to Carol Hewitt, who works part-time for an insurance company called Top UK, and is also able to have the school holidays off. For more information, phone after the programme on 071-388 8282.

Tuesday 11th September – Manual Trades

Ursula O'Flaherty spent 4 yrs at home looking after her 3 children. She found out about a 12 week taster course at WEB, a women's building workshop and discovered a talent for plastering. She's just completed the 1st year of an apprenticeship and at 35 she's one of the oldest apprentices around.

Wednesday 12th September – Self-Employment

If you're already under pressure from the demands of young children, setting up your own business may make your life doubly stressful. On the other hand, it may be the only way to create the flexibility to bring up your family and have a job. Liz Cranwell-Ward is trying to make a go of it as a freelance couture dressmaker.

Thursday 13th September – Hillcroft College

Hillcroft College in Surbiton is unique in that it is the only women's residential adult education college. Anna Wilson left her grown-up children in Liverpool to take a two year course in Social Policy. She's now achieved her certificate of higher education and is about to go off to York University to take a degree.

All this week we are offering our Women Returners Pack. For a copy, write to: Thames Help (Women Returners), PO Box 2LP, London, W1A 2LP.

The regular Monday lunchtime edition of THAMES HELP not only previews the weeks programmes but also has regular features of its own including a COMMUNITY ACTION SLOT and a VOLUNTEER NOTICEBOARD, compiled in conjunction with this page.

THAMES TELEVISION

Thames Help, Thames Television PLC, 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9LL. Telephone: 01-387 9494.

ARE YOU LOOKING for sales, delivery or driving experience? Would you help people choose the furniture they need or perhaps help us to deliver it? Homestore (based in Bow, Tower Hamlets) helps people unable to purchase basic household goods by collecting and distributing donated items. We need two more helpers. Expenses paid. Call Mike Jenn of the BIA on 071-250 1193.

FEMALE COMEDY WRITER with M.E. needs female live-in volunteer general assistant/driver. Age 18-30. No special skills or experience required but competent driving, energy, and flexibility important. Interest in sport and/or outdoor pursuits an advantage. Accommodation plus £39 per week. Min two months. Contact Ann Fletcher, Buckden Towers, Buckden, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE18 9TH.

VOLUNTEER NEEDED. We are developing a new initiative in outreach work with college based young people. We need an enthusiastic volunteer who has experience in counselling and youth work, to assist the Student Services Advisor in developing this innovative project. Time involved - 1 day p/w during term time. Expenses paid. Journey 35 mins from London. Contact: Sasha at Open Door, 35 Brooke Road, Grays, Essex. Tel: 0375 378678.

THE PARKINSON'S DISEASE Society, through its local branches seeks to help sufferers with the problems arising from the affliction and to provide funding for medical research to find a cure for the disease. Our branches need volunteers to help in this vital work. Contact Rodney Wolfe Coe 081-852 4337

UNITED NATIONS Association is seeking enthusiastic volunteers to help out with general campaigning work in its rapidly expanding Youth and Student Dept. Please telephone Tony Samphier on 071 930 2932 for further details.

TO THE LIGHTHOUSE – sponsored cycle ride for AIDS charities needs volunteers for Sunday September 9th. Please call Susie or Donna on 071-737 7273 from 11 am to 7 pm.

WESTMINSTER Carers Service. We offer respite care in the home to relieve carers for a few hours a week. Do you have any spare time? We need reliable, responsible and caring people who would enjoy being with an elderly or disabled person enabling their carer to have a break. Please contact Sarah or David on 976 5999 or write to W.C.S., St James the Less Centre, Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2PT.

LIVERPOOL Personal Service Society. The Home Service offers volunteer support to people facing a terminal illness at home, their partners and families. We are now recruiting volunteers who are able to offer time to provide a flexible support service. The role includes befriending and sharing interests & time with the ill person, being available to listen & talk to all concerned, providing respite for the main carer, accompanying to hospital and supporting partners & families in the early stages of bereavement. Drivers are especially welcome. Expenses are payable. Contact Gillian Moore on 051-236 5255. For information on other volunteer and community projects tel. Mary Bold on 051-236 5255.

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NEW STATESMAN & SOCIETY

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Paul Allan is a broadcaster and playwright. **Edward Ball** lives in New York and writes on cultural politics for the *Village Voice*. **Hugh Brogan** is a Reader in History at the University of Essex and author of the Longman *History of the United States*. **Suzanne Cronje** is a writer on Africa now based in London. **Clive Davis** is a freelance journalist. **Athol Fugard** is a South African playwright. **Martyn Harris** is a feature writer for the *Sunday Telegraph*. His novel *Do It Again* is published in paperback by Penguin in October. **Naguib Mahfouz** was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1987. Translations of two of his books, *The Beggar* and *Autumn Quail*, will be out in November (Doubleday). **Guy Mannes-Abbott** is a film-maker and journalist. **Radhakrishnan Nayar** is a freelance journalist specialising in the third world. **Deanna Petherbridge** is an artist and writer. **Nick Raynsford** is a director of Raynsford and Morris Consultancy. **Kay Parris** is the ex-editor of *Writers' Monthly*. **Anthony Quinn** writes for the *Independent* and the *Sunday Times*. **W L Webb** was literary editor of the *Guardian* for thirty years and the first chairman of the *Booker Prize*. **Edward Said** teaches literature at Columbia University. His books include *Orientalism* and *Covering Islam*.

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ENDGAMES

WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 3141 (previously misnumbered) Set by E O Parrott
Prose in which each word has one more syllable than its predecessor, the cycle repeating when five syllables have been reached.

Report by Tom Foolery
An oddly difficult—evidently infuriating—comp. Even regulars experienced exasperation. You employed shamelessly esoteric pentasyllables, often displaying remarkable ingenuity. Most entrants introduced inelegant circumlocutions: none managed totally realistic idiomatic prose. (Hardly surprising!) Nevertheless, communication *was* achieved, persistence overcoming inconvenience. You grappled manfully/womanfully. Congratulations! A tenner constitutes inadequate remuneration. But fifteen indicates exceptional appreciation.

"This little adventure," Penelope expostulated, "is getting horribly complicated. Accommodating your suppressed fantasies, enjoyable originally, now appears tedious. Adultery eventually palls. Sordid secrecy, continual dissimulation, no longer constitute stimulation. Sexuality should provide mutually pleasurable experiences. If only orthodox copulation invigorated you!"

"Darling!" Nicholas remorsefully ejaculated, "What bizarre fetishes, unspeakable bestiality, cause sulky discontent? Regrettably, erroneously, I assumed erotic deviation reactivated our stagnant sexual activity. Communication has sometimes created difficulties..."

"Intolerable!" she exclaimed bitterly. "Satisfaction's unattainable! You impose conflicting expectations. Irreproachable in public; seductive, voluptuous, uninhibited in private. Destructive, acrimonious recriminations must threaten happiness. Increasingly, prevarication just promotes frustration. Physically incompatible, let's attempt civilised separation, intelligently. We cannot continue quarrelling indefinitely." "Be careful!" Nicholas interrupted spontaneously; "We're quickly becoming compulsively polysyllabic!"

Rose Meade

Our summer holidays usually deteriorate. One's ever buoyantly optimistic anticipation troughs into boringly predictable actuality: long, badly organised, disconsolate perambulations round ancient cathedrals, dutifully investigating tombs, crappy religious statuary, architectural styles (without expertise absolutely humiliating—I'm always confusing Medieval Perpendicular with Gothic); inspecting stultifying theological tracts—mindless, ill-researched, perpetrated invariably by pious moronic illiterates.

Alternatively, we vaguely meander, rubbernecking dispiritedly at crumbling monuments, unspeakably uninteresting, of suspect, utterly debatable authenticity, plus endless scenery, similarly unstimulating—bland prospects, featureless, monotonous, unmemorable; or thunder nationwide, comfortlessly incarcerated in steaming charabancs, deplorably unventilated, hot, sweaty, quarrelsome, undergoing claustrophobia in almost infernal temperatures—voluntarily!

Our precious vacation's dominated perpetually by toilets, mosquitoes, travel-sickness, xenophobia; we return, finally, discovering innumerable tax demands, invoices, obligations. Unbelievable!

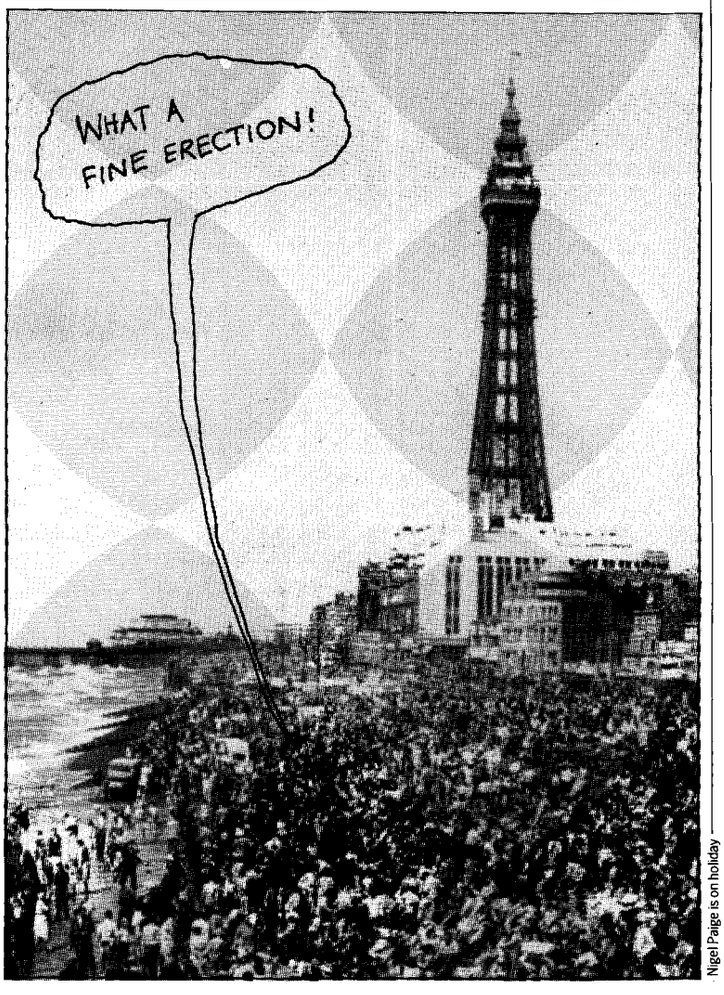
Gerard Benson

In any civilised democratic organisation, key party policies, fluctuating necessarily in direct accordance—arguably opportunistic—with clearly prevailing political *Weltanschauungen*, must address popular anxieties.

Proportional representation has certain attractions: preferable, undeniably, for social, personal, economic considerations, it also usefully discourages extravagantly wild changes—"pendulum" oscillations universally thought stupid, damaging, recidivist, counterproductive and even morally untenable.

Unreconstructed pure Marxist-Leninist political ideology makes certain assumptions: predominant, unquestionably, was Lenin's central-

GRAFFITI BY PAIGE



Nigel Paige is on holiday

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ised economic organisation. But Russian collective agriculture, comprehensively scorned, abused, vilified—disregarded occasionally—has sometimes recently, nevertheless, intimidated its many opponents.

Literary exaggeration is sadly commonplace; humility, unsurprisingly, quite rarely complements inordinate creativity. Said Horace: "*Exigi monumentum.*" Comparatively, my output possesses superior qualifications to survive uncaring posterity.

Uninterested, the public expresses negligible enthusiasm.

Giles Swayne

One enters regular competitions unbegrudgingly, though certain opponents' literary communications are often seemingly unbeatable. Indubitably, though modest scholarship, unexciting vocabulary and very markedly pedestrian imagination make meagre weaponry, nevertheless stickability may outweigh genius. Perseverance, occasionally, can almost certainly marginalise creativity and summer vacations intervening fortuitously might reduce maximum opposition.

Superabundance of adverbs (occurring regularly) unfortunately may create stylistic difficulties, overburdening one's basic structural simplicity, necessitating some control. Furthermore, participles unashamedly crowd into sentences, guaranteeing infelicitous script.

Perhaps cleverer competitors, incomparable Bill Greenwell included—correspondent magisterial—may devise strategems: hyphenations, transliterations, or other similar unattractive improvisations to secure victory; not-withstanding, adjudication may reward underdogs. Penalising nonconformity has become recently acceptable. Incontestably Fagg's, Parrott's offerings epitomise unrestrainedness when compared alongside Alexandrine serendipity.

David Alexander

No 3144 Set by Tom Foolery

... or arguably set by Katie Mallett, who gave me the idea by totally misunderstanding number 3141 under stress. ("I AM RAPIDLY REACHING THE END OF MY TETHER WITH FOUR CHILDREN CONTINUALLY BORED HAVING BEEN ON SCHOOL HOLIDAYS FOR SEVERAL WEEKS.") Explanations, please, of any religious, philosophical or scientific theory, in words of one syllable. 200 words maximum, to be in by 20 September.

SALAMANCA

COLLINS DICTIONARIES

Copies of the Collins Concise English Dictionary for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Salamanca 164, *New Statesman & Society*, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ by 17 September.

Salamanca: 164 '?'

This puzzle celebrates the centenary of the birth of 10 18D. Some answers are to be entered according to a real-life event, while some others are given clues (undefined) to answers (two or three words) which must be entered fictionally (3 is in OED).

ACROSS

1. Diehard? On the contrary! (3 words)
11. But mutilating one in death *not* this sort of subject for 10?
13. They're hasty with leading crew at sea
14. Italic mapmakers are permitted to use
15. Head of Madonna appearing on a relic: it's this?
16. Used spraycan on attacker? (Male one who's finally fled)
18. Den of thieves? (2 words)
19. Fleshy part of body: a chap's overlaps top of pants
20. Do as I say and ring the governor
24. Once sight end of quasar in the heavens
25. Holmes to Watson: "I work at length"
26. How *some* answers are to be entered —emptily, once left out?
28. Rare kinship between 14 and 5 (atomics)
30. This little water-dweller can be a carp?
33.
34. Lear's Cordelia? (2 words)
35. Dead worthless person at gay party?
36. Wouldn't ie with mixing have become now - - -?
37. Nigh? (two words)

DOWN

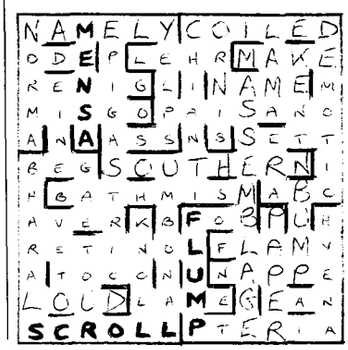
1. Schoolteacher? (Master, American)
2. Some bug likes this fruit
3. With fingers that are cold? Yes, at having to work
4. The beastly competition of speed motorists take part in?
5. One odd Diners' Club member?
6. Spi:ted, but most affected with pains
7. It's tranquil for instance in middle of storm-centre mostly
8. Assassination, butchery, carnage, etc (2 words)
9. Absent-minded dyer only blundering
12. I've long feathers in my tail and I'd crop it carefully to keep breadth and radius in it
17. A letter from 37
21. Where's 10's denouements occur? Criminal packs bag with energy! (2 words)
22. The best of eggs? I order in half-a-dozen
23. One wearing (I see) raised pips
24. What spoils neat work? A little of smeared dirt e.g. on
27. Forces lock criminally: old one's broken
29. It's credit to a lifelong leader of religious rites
31. Prickly plant: do see one with point in, hard
32. Jock's trough and something to support it, we hear

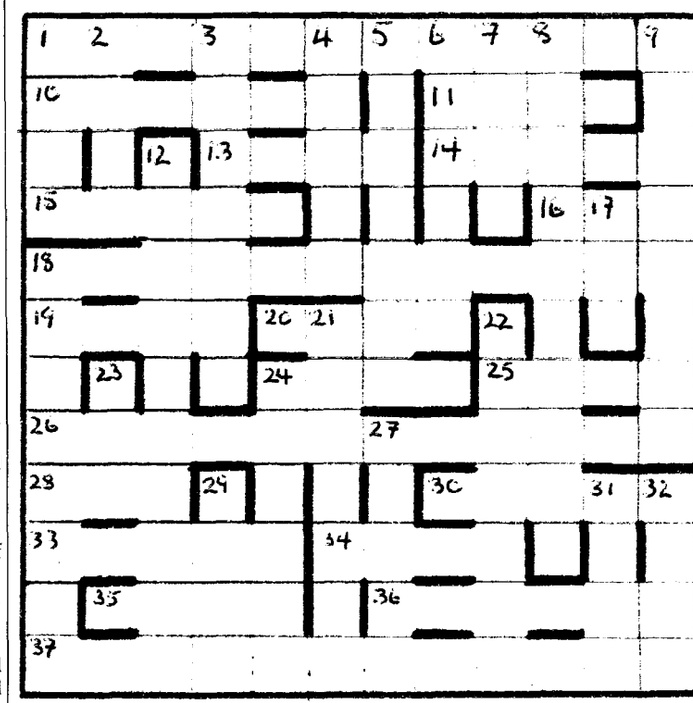
Prizewinners for Salamanca 162:

M A L Willey, Leeds;
P H & R M Dacre, York;
P W McCombie, London E3

Solution to 162

Answer 1) sc + roll; ii) anag. name S; iii) f + lump





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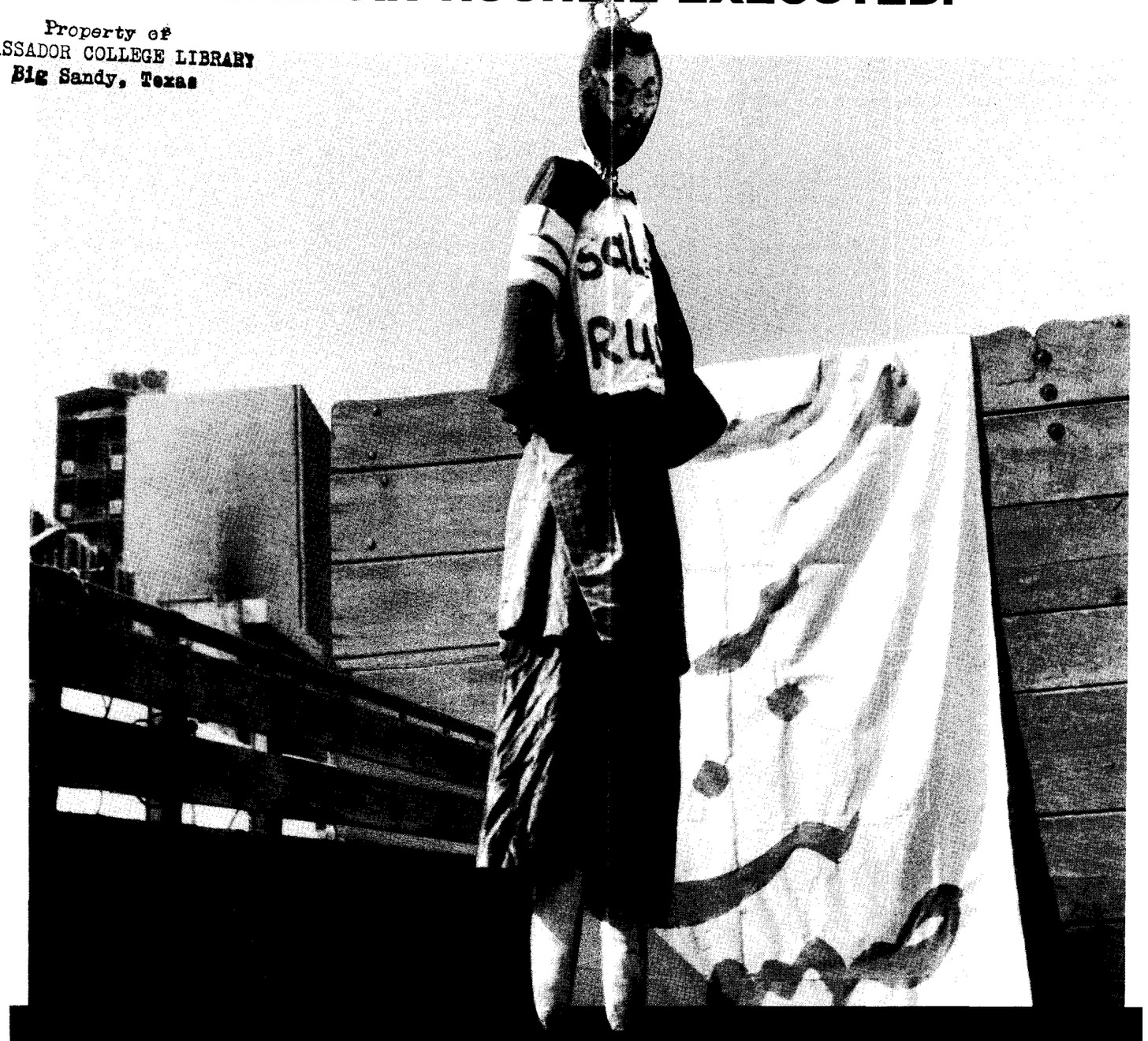

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Subjects for discussion eG *The* **Rushdie Affair.**

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